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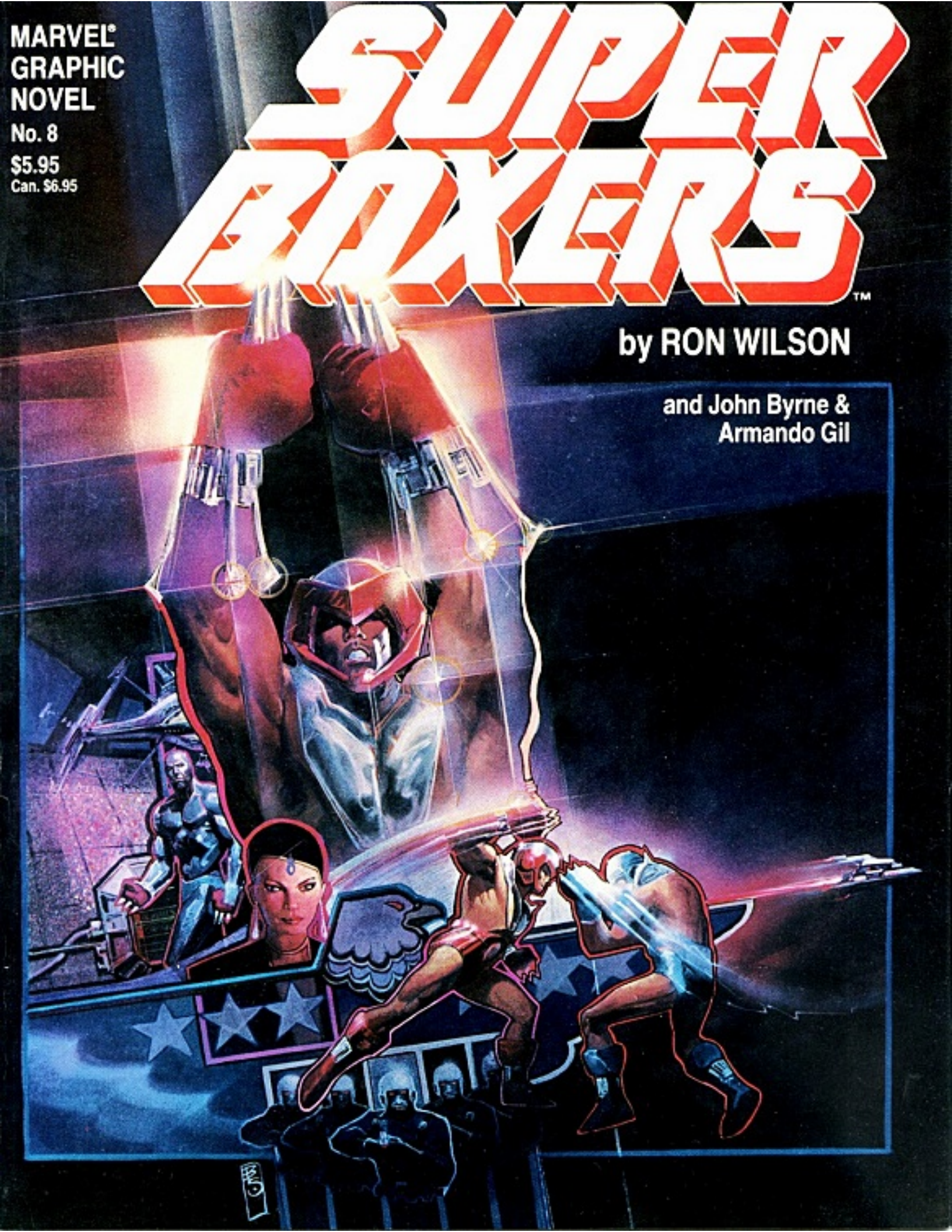
SUPER BOXERS™

by RON WILSON

and John Byrne &
Armando Gil



IN THE WORLD OF THE FUTURE, WINNING IS EVERYTHING...
AND LOSING IS CERTAIN DEATH!

A MARVEL GRAPHIC NOVEL

SUPER BOXERS

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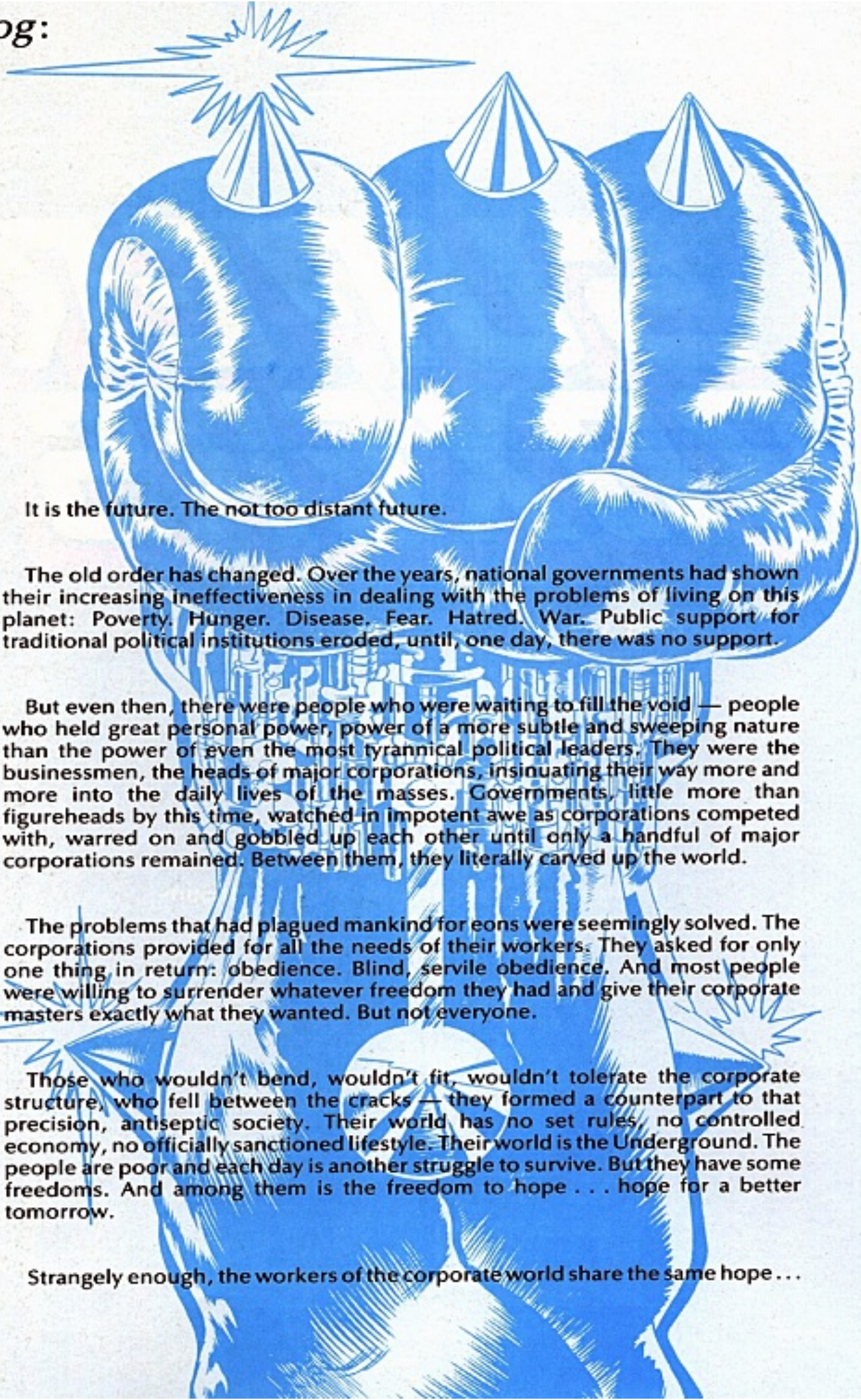


It is the future. The not too distant future.

The old order has changed. Over the years, national governments had shown their increasing ineffectiveness in dealing with the problems of living on this planet: Poverty. Hunger. Disease. Fear. Hatred. War. Public support for traditional political institutions eroded, until, one day, there was no support.

But even then, there were people who were waiting to fill the void — people who held great personal power, power of a more subtle and sweeping nature than the power of even the most tyrannical political leaders. They were the businessmen, the heads of major corporations, insinuating their way more and more into the daily lives of the masses. Governments, little more than figureheads by this time, watched in impotent awe as corporations competed with, warred on and gobbled up each other until only a handful of major corporations remained. Between them, they literally carved up the world.

The problems that had plagued mankind for eons were seemingly solved. The corporations provided for all the needs of their workers. They asked for only one thing in return: obedience. Blind, servile obedience. And most people were willing to surrender whatever freedom they had and give their corporate masters exactly what they wanted. But not everyone.

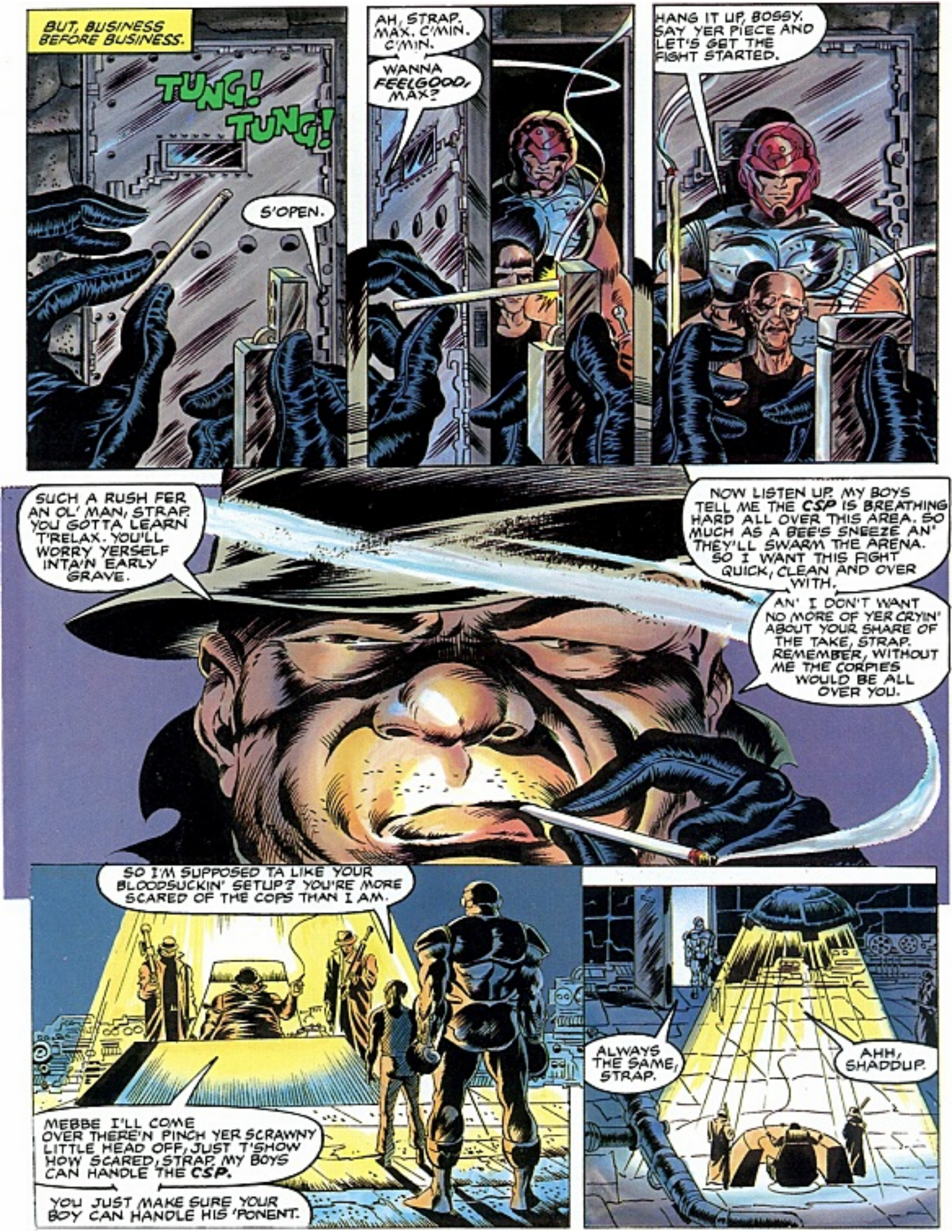
Those who wouldn't bend, wouldn't fit, wouldn't tolerate the corporate structure, who fell between the cracks — they formed a counterpart to that precision, antiseptic society. Their world has no set rules, no controlled economy, no officially sanctioned lifestyle. Their world is the Underground. The people are poor and each day is another struggle to survive. But they have some freedoms. And among them is the freedom to hope . . . hope for a better tomorrow.

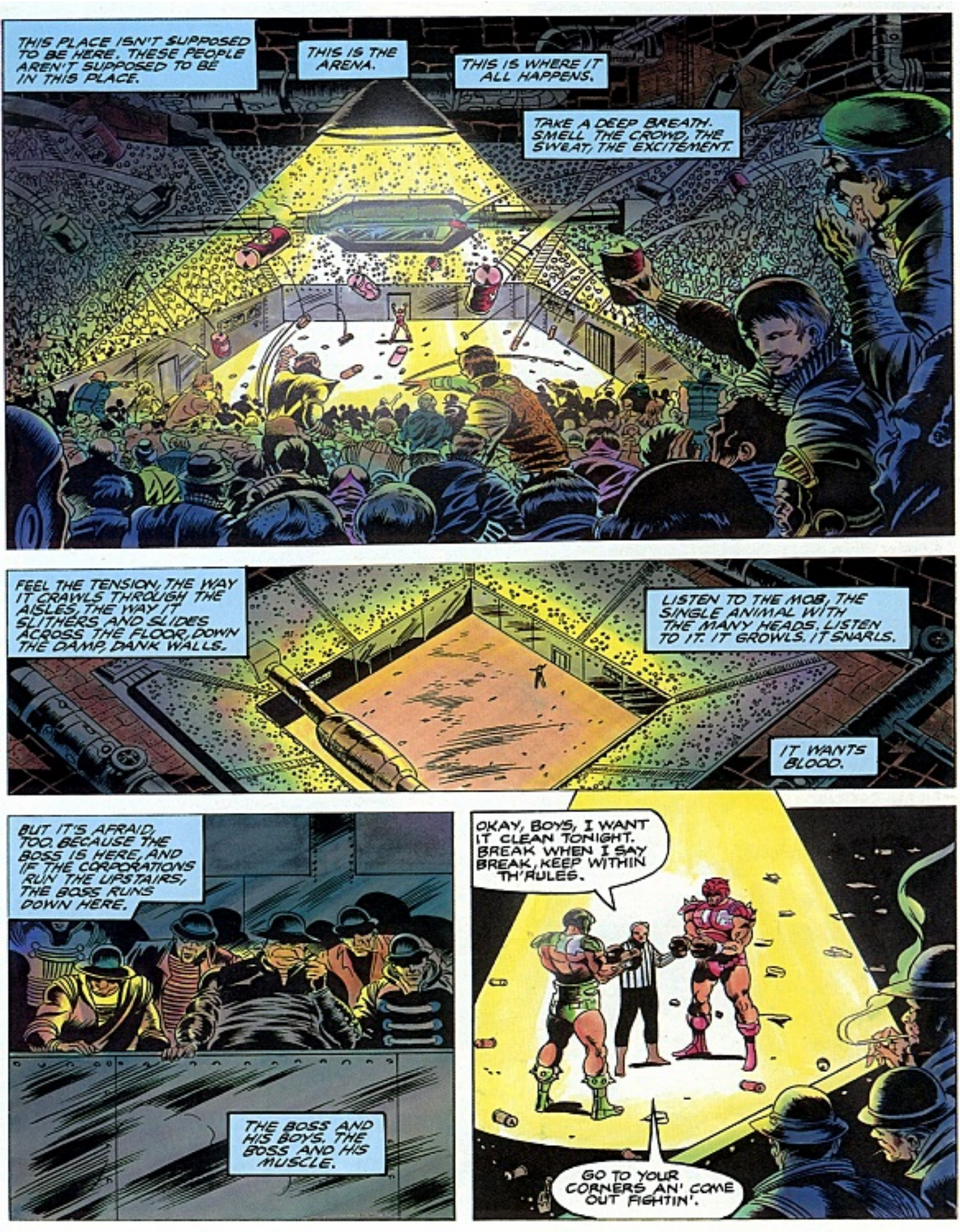
Strangely enough, the workers of the corporate world share the same hope . . .

YOU SEE HIM, DON'T YOU?
SURE YOU DO. EVEN DOWN HERE HE'S HARD TO MISS.
BAR
MOVIE 2
Hotel
FOOD
EVEN DOWN HERE WHERE BEING TOUGH IS THE SAME AS BEING ALIVE, HE STANDS OUT.
WATCH HIM. WATCH THE WAY HE MOVES. SEE HOW NOTHING GOES FURTHER THAN IT NEEDS TO, HOW NO MOTION--NOT EVEN THE TINIEST MOVEMENT IS WASTED.
MAX. IF HE'S GOT ANOTHER NAME HE DOESN'T BOTHER TO TELL ANYONE.
MAX. SIMPLE, CLEAN STRAIGHTFORWARD. JUST LIKE HIM.
FOLLOW HIM.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE LAW JUST YET. YOU'RE SAFE AS LONG AS YOU STAY CLOSE BY MAX.
JUST FOLLOW.
FOLLOW DEEPER INTO THE UNDERGROUND LIFE.

DON'T BE AFRAID.
IT'S DARK DOWN HERE. IT SMELLS BAD. BUT THERE'S NOTHING MUCH THAT CAN HURT YOU.
RATS, MAYBE, BUT THEY'RE MORE AFRAID OF YOU THAN YOU ARE OF THEM
C'MON. WE'RE ALMOST THERE.
THUNK THUNK
WHO IS IT?
SANTY CLAUS. OPEN UP.
SMART GUY. MEBBE SHOULD LEAVE YA T'THE RATS.
MAYBE WON'T BE NO FIGHT IF YOU DO.
GODDAMMIT, MAX, WILL YOU STOP SCREWIN' AROUND AN' GET READY!
EASE OFF, STRAP. YOU'LL GIVE YOURSELF A CARDIAC.
ALREADY HAD THREE T'DAY TRYIN' T'GET THESE CORPY GLOVES WORKIN'.
NOW SUIT UP AND STOP WASTIN' MY TIME.

HOW MUCH LONGER, STRAP? BOSS'S WAITIN' ON YA.
AH, GO CRAWL UP YER ARM-PIT, GOON. I'LL BE READY WHEN I'M READY...
WHICH'LL BE A SIGHT LONGER IF I HAFTA CHATTER WITH YOU.
YOU GOT A FAST TONGUE, OL' MAN. ONE A' THESE DAYS I JUST MIGHT MAKE ME A BOW TIE OUTTA IT.
LISTEN, CORP-FACE, YOU GOT NO CLOUT DOWN HERE, SEE? ONLY THE BOSS CARRIES WEIGHT HERE. AN' ONLY BANTAM WEIGHT.
MY BOY MAX. HE'S THE CHAMP, GOT IT? HE'S THE HEAVYWEIGHT DOWN HERE. WE GOTTA CUT THE SYNDICATE IN FOR THE PROTECTION, BUT WITHOUT MAX YOU'D GET A BIG SLICE A' NOTHIN'. GOT IT?
JUST BE READY ON TIME, STRAP.
AH, GO SUCK YER EAR!
ALWAYS THE SAME SONG, STRAP. WHY DON'T YA JUST MAKE A VIDISC AN' PLAY IT FOR 'EM BEFORE EVERY 'BOUT? SAVE ENERGY.
AHH, DON'T YOU GET A BIG MOUTH, TOO, NOW, BOY. WE HAFTA PUT UP WITH THE SYNDICS, BUT I DON'T GOTTA TAKE NO LIP FROM GOONS.
NOW HOLD STILL. YOU GOTTA BE LOCKED IN GOOD AN' TIGHT FER THIS'N, MAX. YOU GOTTA BE PERFECT.
THIS IS THE BIG ONE. THE BIGGEST!
THEN LET'S GO WIN IT, STRAP.

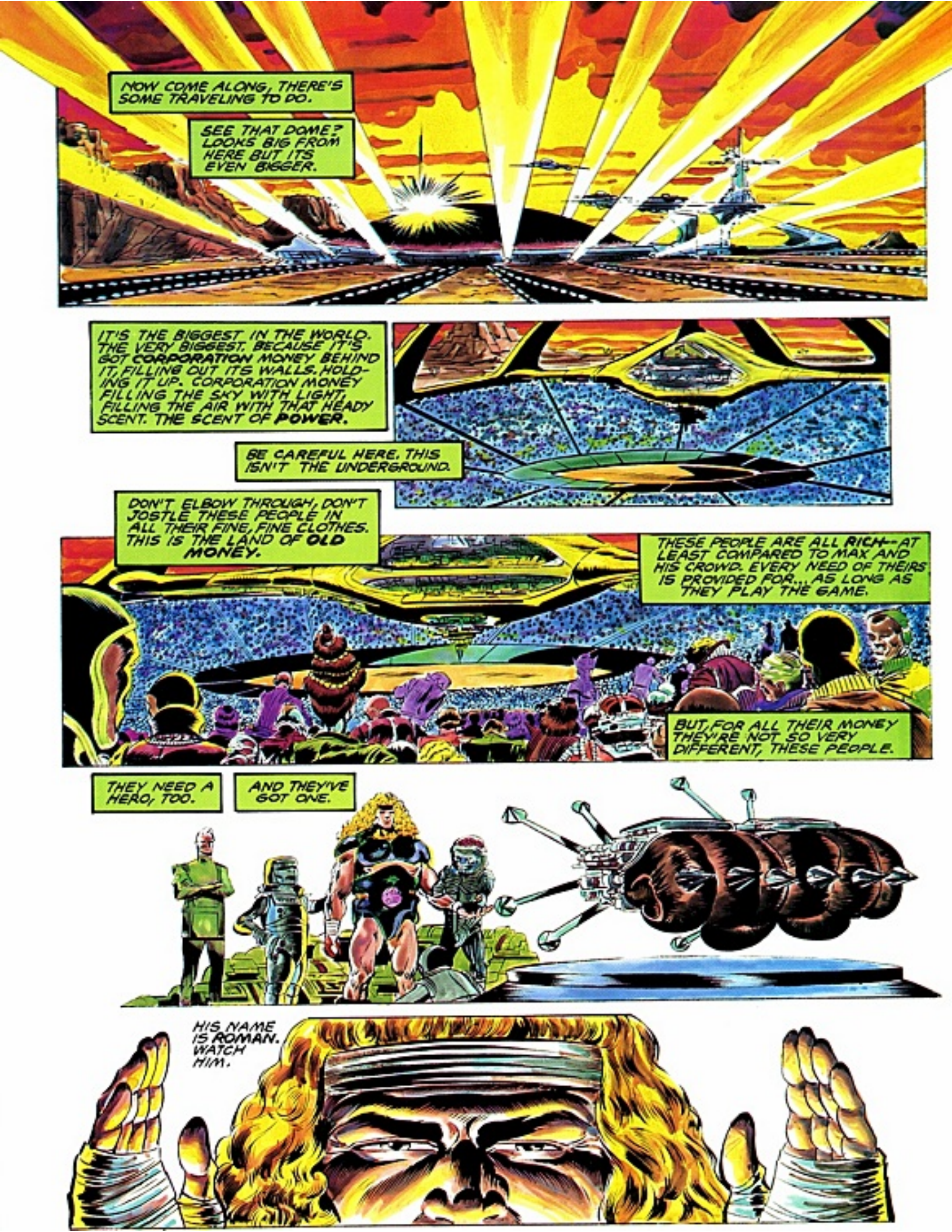

BUT, BUSINESS BEFORE BUSINESS.
TUNG! TUNG!
S'OPEN.
AH, STRAP. MAX. C'MIN. C'MIN.
WANNA FEELGOOD, MAX?
HANG IT UP, BOSSY. SAY YER PIECE AND LET'S GET THE FIGHT STARTED.
SUCH A RUSH FER AN OL' MAN, STRAP. YOU GOTTA LEARN T'RELAX. YOU'LL WORRY YERSELF INTA'N EARLY GRAVE.
NOW LISTEN UP. MY BOYS TELL ME THE CSP IS BREATHING HARD ALL OVER THIS AREA. SO MUCH AS A BEE'S SNEEZE AN' THEY'LL SWARM THE ARENA. SO I WANT THIS FIGHT QUICK, CLEAN AND OVER WITH.
AN' I DON'T WANT NO MORE OF YER CRYIN' ABOUT YOUR SHARE OF THE TAKE, STRAP. REMEMBER, WITHOUT ME THE CORPIES WOULD BE ALL OVER YOU.
SO I'M SUPPOSED TA LIKE YOUR BLOODSUCKIN' SETUP? YOU'RE MORE SCARED OF THE COPS THAN I AM.
MEBBE I'LL COME OVER THERE'N PINCH YER SCRAWNY LITTLE HEAD OFF, JUST T'SHOW HOW SCARED, STRAP. MY BOYS CAN HANDLE THE CSP.
YOU JUST MAKE SURE YOUR BOY CAN HANDLE HIS 'PONENT.
ALWAYS THE SAME, STRAP.
AHH, SHADDUP.


THIS PLACE ISN'T SUPPOSED TO BE HERE. THESE PEOPLE AREN'T SUPPOSED TO BE IN THIS PLACE.
THIS IS THE ARENA.
THIS IS WHERE IT ALL HAPPENS.
TAKE A DEEP BREATH. SMELL THE CROWD, THE SWEAT, THE EXCITEMENT.
FEEL THE TENSION, THE WAY IT CRAWLS THROUGH THE AISLES, THE WAY IT SLITHERS AND SLIDES ACROSS THE FLOOR, DOWN THE DAMP, DANK WALLS.
LISTEN TO THE MOB, THE SINGLE ANIMAL WITH THE MANY HEADS. LISTEN TO IT. IT GROWLS. IT SNARLS.
IT WANTS BLOOD.
BUT IT'S AFRAID, TOO. BECAUSE THE BOSS IS HERE, AND IF THE CORPORATIONS RUN THE UPSTAIRS, THE BOSS RUNS DOWN HERE.
THE BOSS AND HIS BOYS. THE BOSS AND HIS MUSCLE.
OKAY, BOYS, I WANT IT CLEAN TONIGHT. BREAK WHEN I SAY BREAK, KEEP WITHIN TH'RULES.
GO TO YOUR CORNERS AN' COME OUT FIGHTIN'.

POWER ON.
A TREMOR RUNS THROUGH THE CROWD. AN ELECTRIC CRACKLE TOUCHES THE CONTROL BOOTH OVERHEAD, FILLS THE AIR AROUND IT.
THE BOXERS FACE EACH OTHER. THEY CIRCLE. THEY DANCE. THEY WAIT FOR THE RIGHT MOMENT.
THEY FEEL THE POWER FLOWING THROUGH THEIR GLOVES, THROUGH THEM.
AND THEY START.

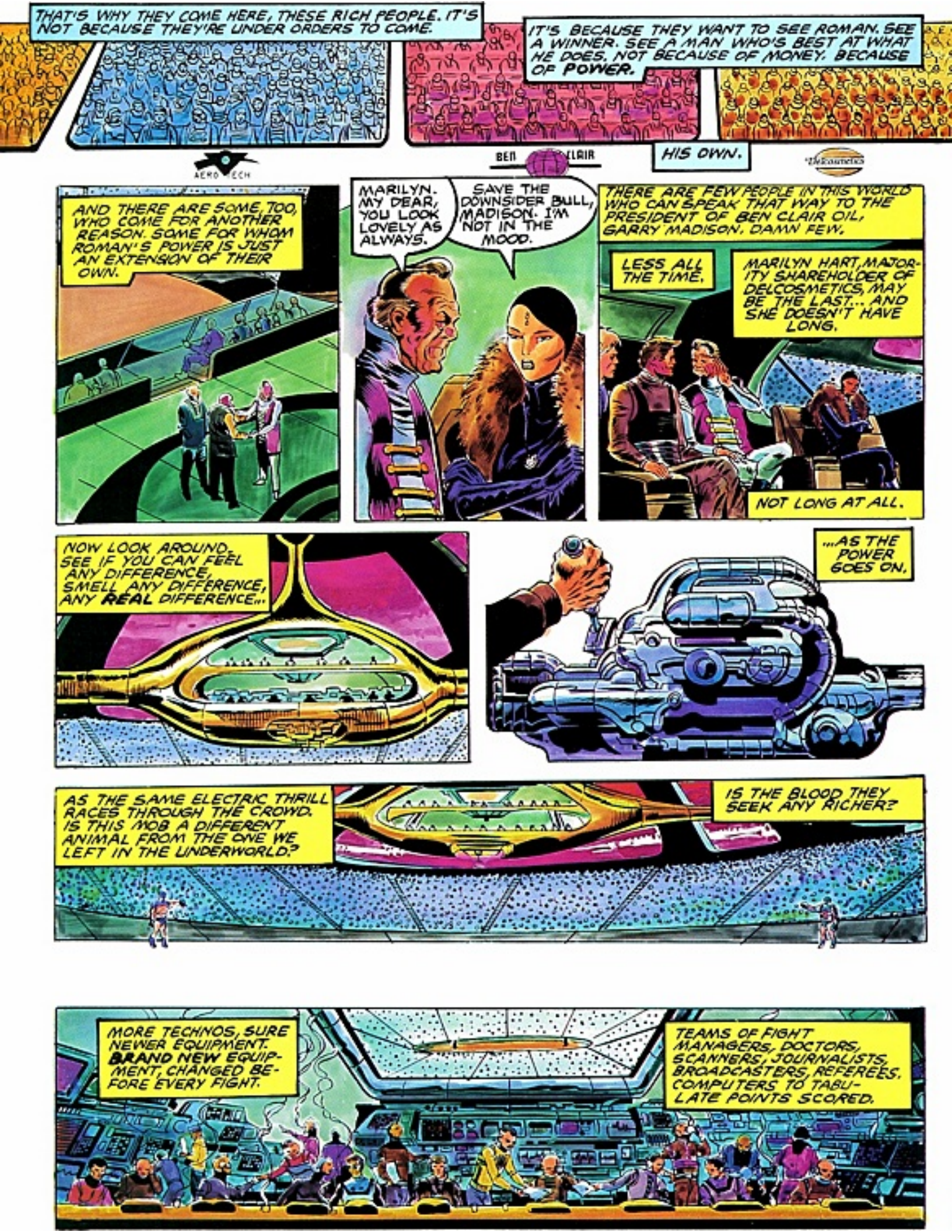
NO KIDDING AROUND NOW.
NO MARQUIS OF QUEENSBURY. NOT DOWN HERE.
SURE THERE'RE RULES. RULES THAT SAY YOU CAN'T ACTUALLY TEAR THE OTHER GUY'S HEAD OFF, EVEN THOUGH YOU SOMETIMES THINK YOU COULD.
RULES ABOUT WHEN YOU HAVE TO BACK OFF, WHEN YOU HAVE TO GIVE THE OTHER GUY A BREATHER.
OUR BOY MAX, HE FIGHTS BY THE RULES.
SOMETIMES HE PAYS A HARD PRICE FOR IT.
AND HIS TRAINER IN THE CONTROL BOOTH IS ALL TOO AWARE OF THAT.
JESUS, MAX! MAX, CAN YOU HEAR ME? ARE YOU OKAY? MAX!!
'M'OKAY, STRAP. DON'T BUG ME.
I'M BUSY.

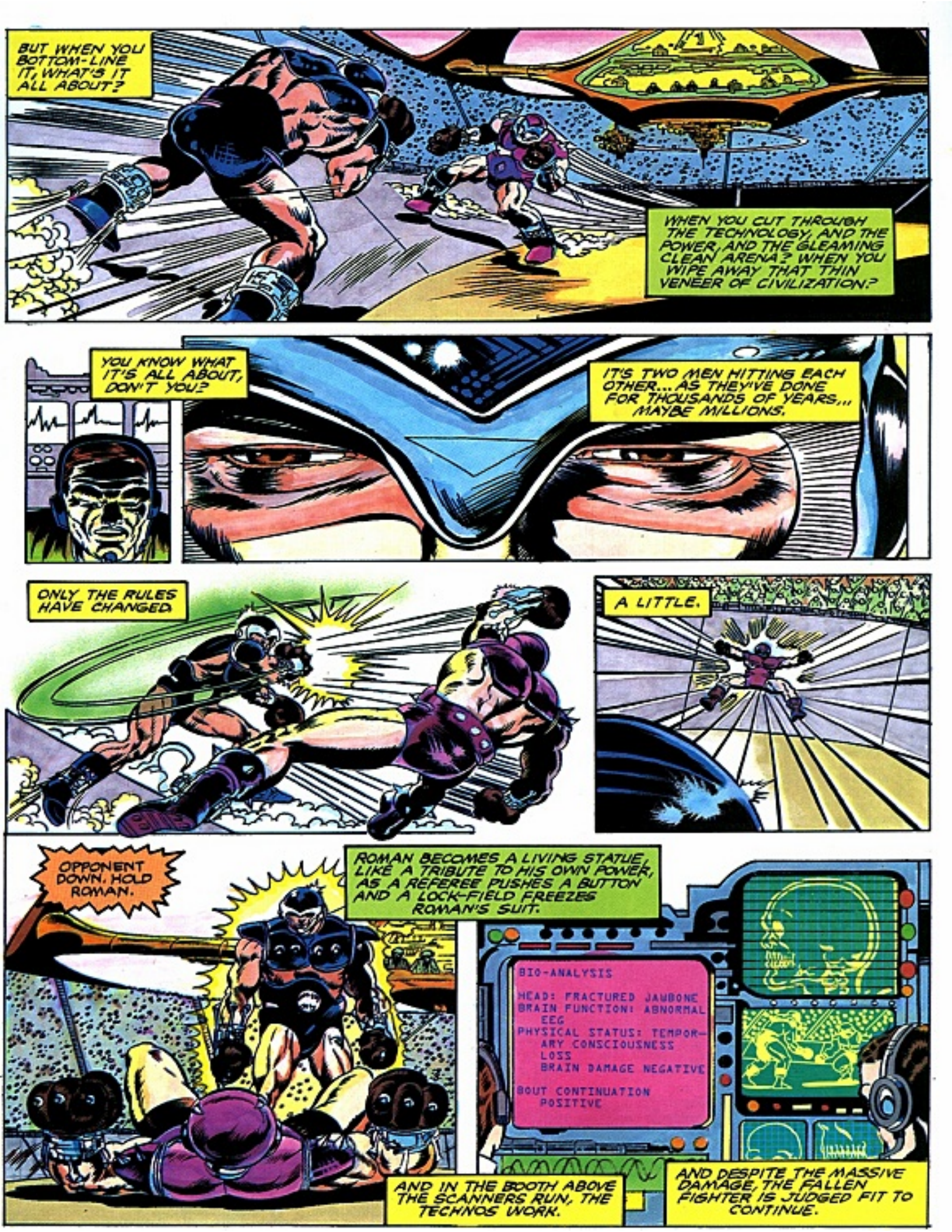
YEAH, MAX IS BUSY...
...BECAUSE MAX IS A FIGHTER. THAT'S ALL HE DOES.
AND MOST OF THESE PEOPLE THINK HE'S THE BEST AT WHAT HE DOES.
HOW ABOUT YOU?
IMPRESSED? THOSE GLOVES PACK FIVE HUNDRED POUNDS WHEN THEY CONNECT. THEY CAN TURN AN UNPROTECTED MAN'S INSIDES TO JELLO.
THEY CAN HOMOGENIZE YOUR BRAINS FOR YOU, THOSE GLOVES.
THE PEOPLE, THEY LOVE IT ALL.
THE YOUNG AND THE OLD, THEY ALL COME HERE--COME TO SEE MAX.
PEOPLE WITH A LOT OF HARD YEARS BEHIND THEM. PEOPLE WHO'VE ONLY STARTED THE HARD LIFE.
PEOPLE WHO NEED A HERO.
MAX.
OH... AND SOME PEOPLE WHO DON'T BELONG.
REMEMBER THIS FACE. REMEMBER IT.
REMEMBER THAT HE'S ONE OF THOSE RIGHT IN THERE CHEERING WHEN MAX TAKES HIS WALK OUT. MAX THE HERO.
MAX THE WINNER.


NOW COME ALONG, THERE'S SOME TRAVELING TO DO.
SEE THAT DOME? LOOKS BIG FROM HERE BUT ITS EVEN BIGGER.
IT'S THE BIGGEST IN THE WORLD. THE VERY BIGGEST. BECAUSE IT'S GOT CORPORATION MONEY BEHIND IT, FILLING OUT ITS WALLS. HOLDING IT UP. CORPORATION MONEY FILLING THE SKY WITH LIGHT, FILLING THE AIR WITH THAT HEADY SCENT. THE SCENT OF POWER.
BE CAREFUL HERE. THIS ISN'T THE UNDERGROUND.
DON'T ELBOW THROUGH, DON'T JOSTLE THESE PEOPLE IN ALL THEIR FINE, FINE CLOTHES. THIS IS THE LAND OF OLD MONEY.
THESE PEOPLE ARE ALL RICH--AT LEAST COMPARED TO MAX AND HIS CROWD. EVERY NEED OF THEIRS IS PROVIDED FOR... AS LONG AS THEY PLAY THE GAME.
BUT, FOR ALL THEIR MONEY THEY'RE NOT SO VERY DIFFERENT, THESE PEOPLE.
THEY NEED A HERO, TOO.
AND THEY'VE GOT ONE.
HIS NAME IS ROMAN. WATCH HIM.

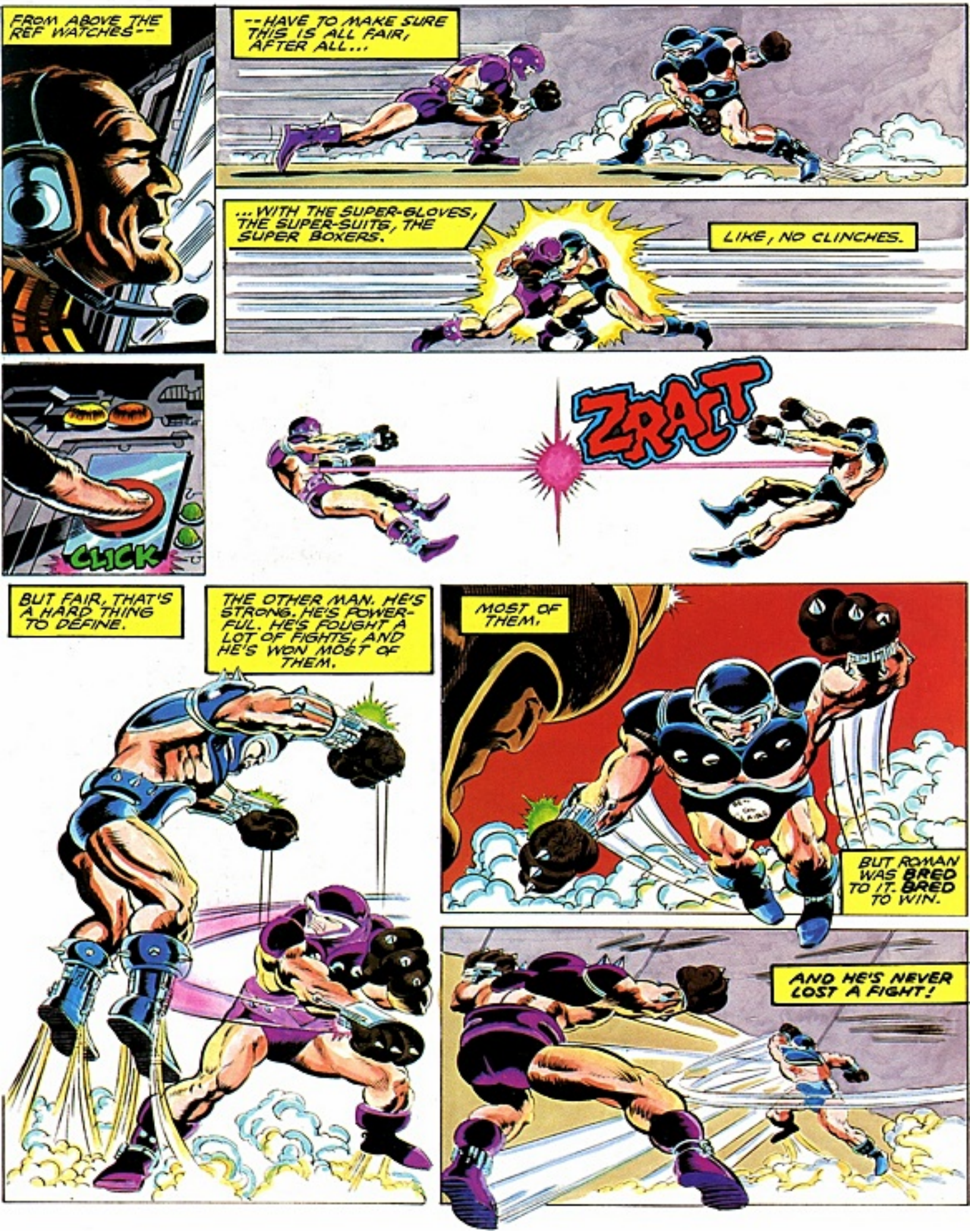
THE PRE-FIGHT PREPARATIONS AREN'T SO DIFFERENT EITHER.
XL7
SURE, THESE XL-7's ARE NEWER, FIT BETTER THAN THE ONES THEY HAVE IN THE UNDER-GROUND.
BUT NO MATTER WHERE THE MATCH IS, THEY'RE STILL THE MOST POTENT GLOVES IN USE.
AND ONCE THOSE NEURO-NODES LOCK ONTO YOUR FOREARMS, THE RESULT IS THE SAME--
YOUR PUNCHES PACK SEVEN TIMES THE POWER.
YOU'RE COMPETING IN THE TOP WEIGHT CLASS.
YOU'RE A SUPER BOXER!
AND, ONCE YOUR BODY ARMOR IS ATTACHED, YOUR JET-BOOTS ARE FITTED, YOUR HELMET IS ON...
...YOUR COMM-LINK IS ADJUSTED, YOU'RE ALL SET, YOU'RE READY.
ROMAN IS READY.
GOOD HOUSE, ROMAN. THE BEST YET. YOU MUST BE AT PRIME TONIGHT.
WE HAVE A VERY PERHAPS
DON'T WORRY, MR. MADISON. I'D NEVER LET THE CORPORATION DOWN. I'D NEVER LET YOU DOWN.
WATCH HIM!
WATCH HIM MOVE...

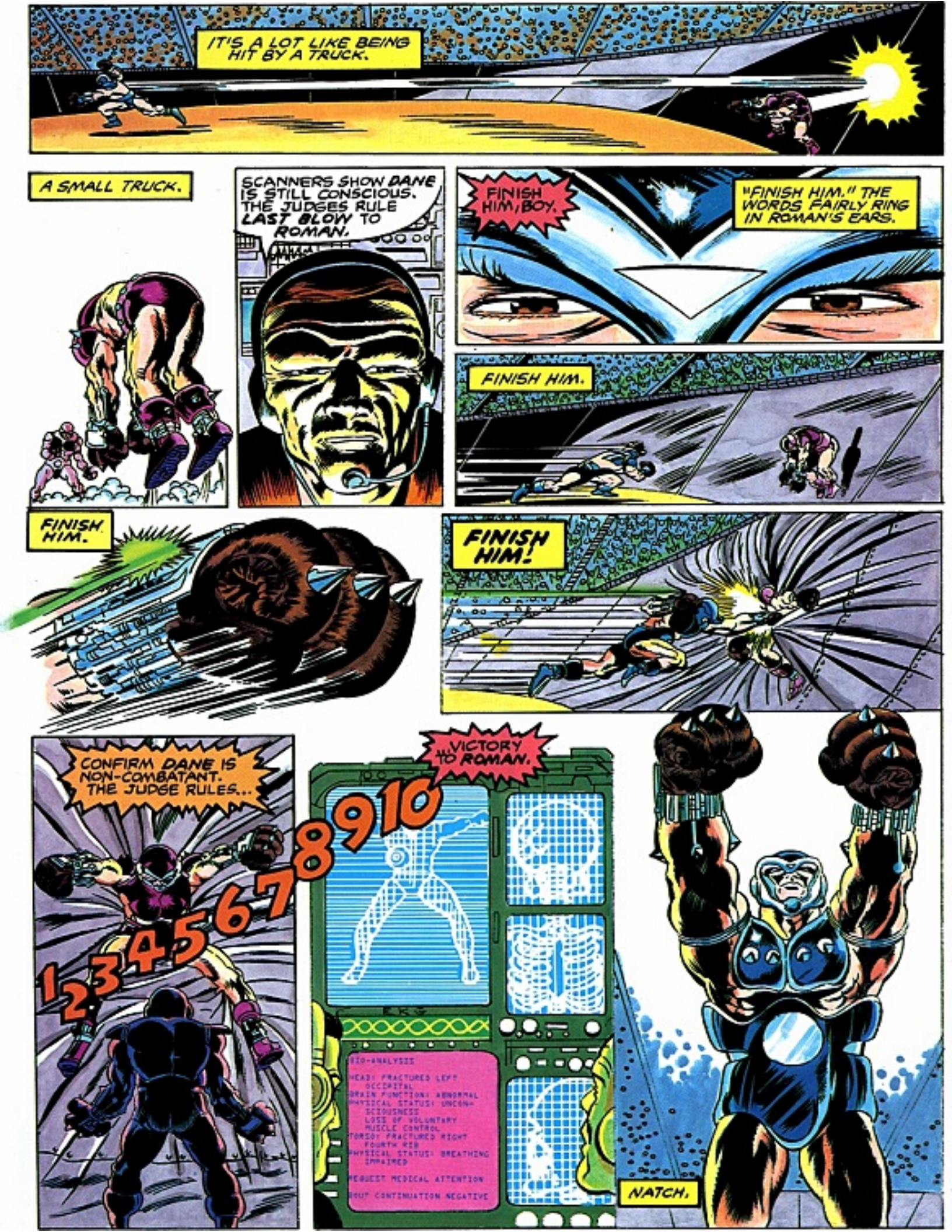
EVERY MOVE A PICTURE, A SYMPHONY.
DOES HE REMIND YOU OF MAX?
HE SHOULD, BECAUSE THEY'RE CUT FROM THE SAME CLOTH, THOSE TWO.
FIGHTERS.
WINNERS.
REMEMBER THAT. WINNERS.
MAX IS A WINNER. ROMAN IS A WINNER.
BUT MAX GREW TO IT. ROMAN WAS BORN TO IT-- BRED TO IT.
AND ROMAN HAS NEVER LOST A FIGHT.
NEVER!


THAT'S WHY THEY COME HERE, THESE RICH PEOPLE. IT'S NOT BECAUSE THEY'RE UNDER ORDERS TO COME.
IT'S BECAUSE THEY WANT TO SEE ROMAN. SEE A WINNER. SEE A MAN WHO'S BEST AT WHAT HE DOES. NOT BECAUSE OF MONEY. BECAUSE OF POWER.
HIS OWN.
AERO TECH
BEN CLAIR
AND THERE ARE SOME, TOO, WHO COME FOR ANOTHER REASON. SOME FOR WHOM ROMAN'S POWER IS JUST AN EXTENSION OF THEIR OWN.
MARILYN. MY DEAR, YOU LOOK LOVELY AS ALWAYS.
SAVE THE DOWNSIDER BULL, MADISON. I'M NOT IN THE MOOD.
THERE ARE FEW PEOPLE IN THIS WORLD WHO CAN SPEAK THAT WAY TO THE PRESIDENT OF BEN CLAIR OIL, GARRY MADISON. DAMN FEW.
LESS ALL THE TIME.
MARILYN HART, MAJORITY SHAREHOLDER OF DELCOSMETICS, MAY BE THE LAST... AND SHE DOESN'T HAVE LONG.
NOT LONG AT ALL.
NOW LOOK AROUND. SEE IF YOU CAN FEEL ANY DIFFERENCE, SMELL ANY DIFFERENCE, ANY REAL DIFFERENCE...
...AS THE POWER GOES ON.
AS THE SAME ELECTRIC THRILL RACES THROUGH THE CROWD. IS THIS MOB A DIFFERENT ANIMAL FROM THE ONE WE LEFT IN THE UNDERWORLD?
IS THE BLOOD THEY SEEK ANY RICHER?
MORE TECHNOS, SURE NEWER EQUIPMENT. BRAND NEW EQUIPMENT, CHANGED BEFORE EVERY FIGHT.
TEAMS OF FIGHT MANAGERS, DOCTORS, SCANNERS, JOURNALISTS, BROADCASTERS, REFEREES. COMPUTERS TO TABULATE POINTS SCORED.


BUT WHEN YOU BOTTOM-LINE IT, WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?
WHEN YOU CUT THROUGH THE TECHNOLOGY, AND THE POWER, AND THE GLEAMING CLEAN ARENA? WHEN YOU WIPE AWAY THAT THIN VENEER OF CIVILIZATION?
YOU KNOW WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT, DON'T YOU?
IT'S TWO MEN HITTING EACH OTHER... AS THEY'VE DONE FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS,,, MAYBE MILLIONS.
ONLY THE RULES HAVE CHANGED.
A LITTLE.
OPPONENT DOWN. HOLD ROMAN.
ROMAN BECOMES A LIVING STATUE, LIKE A TRIBUTE TO HIS OWN POWER, AS A REFEREE PUSHES A BUTTON AND A LOCK-FIELD FREEZES ROMAN'S SUIT.
BIO-ANALYSIS
HEAD: FRACTURED JAWBONE
BRAIN FUNCTION: ABNORMAL EEG
PHYSICAL STATUS: TEMPORARY CONSCIOUSNESS LOSS
BRAIN DAMAGE NEGATIVE
BOUT CONTINUATION POSITIVE
AND IN THE BOOTH ABOVE THE SCANNERS RUN, THE TECHNOS WORK.
AND DESPITE THE MASSIVE DAMAGE, THE FALLEN FIGHTER IS JUDGED FIT TO CONTINUE.

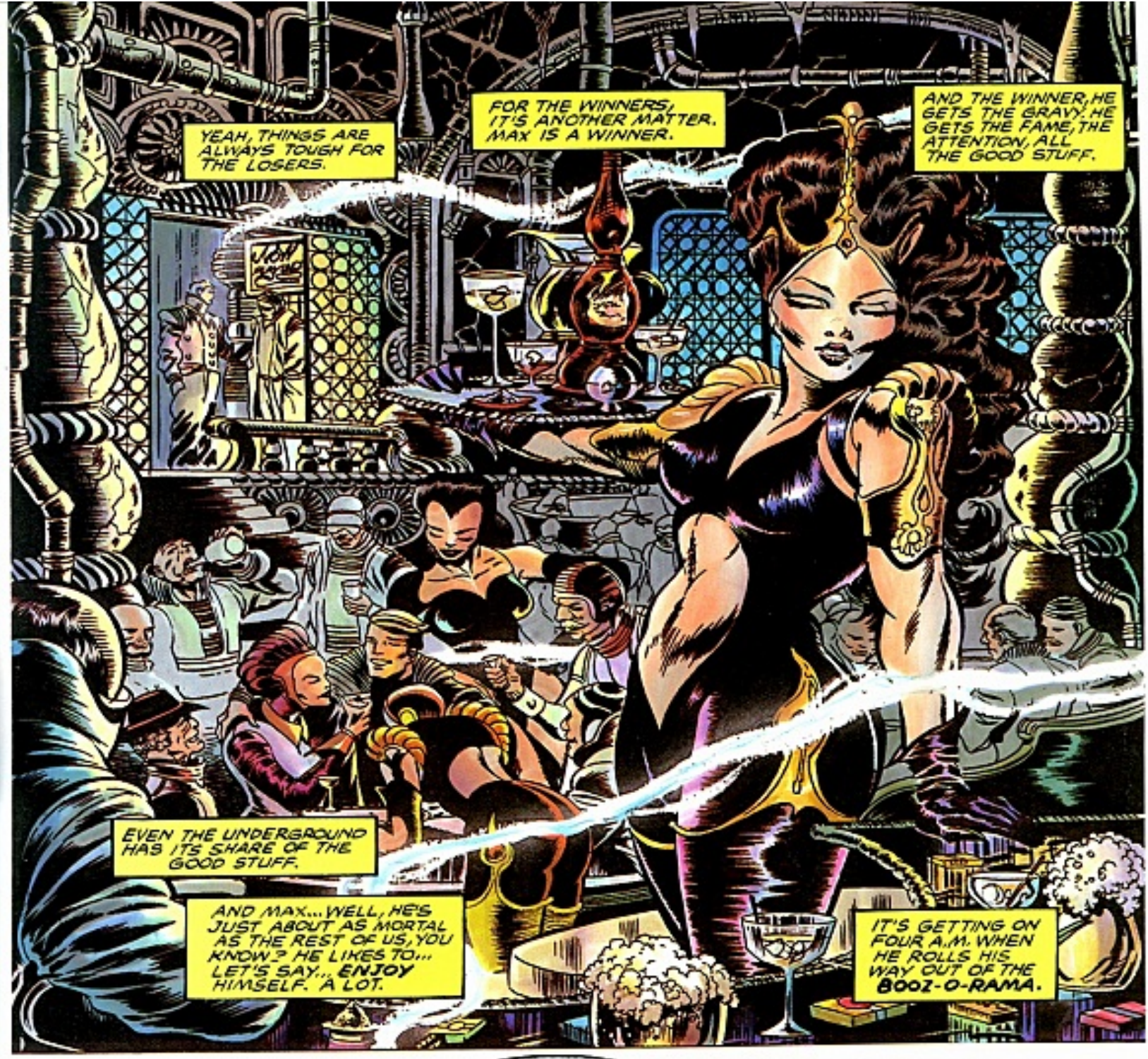
ROMAN PRESSES THE ATTACK...
AS HIS OPPONENT'S SUIT DRIPS PAINKILLERS INTO HIS BLOODSTREAM, CANCELING OUT THE BLINDING AGONIES, MAKING HIM GO ON AND ON...
...AS ROMAN'S SUIT MEASURES HIS ADRENALIN FLOW, PUMPS HIM UP, MAKES HIM STRONGER, STRONGER, STRONGER.
THEY ARE THE BEST AND THE BRIGHTEST, THE CHAMPIONS OF TWO MASSIVE CORPORATE BLOCS.
XL7
AND THEY WILL FIGHT AND FIGHT AND FIGHT UNTIL ONE OF THEM CANNOT POSSIBLY FIGHT ANYMORE.
WHICHEVER COMES FIRST.
OR UNTIL THE CROWD HAS HAD ENOUGH.


FROM ABOVE THE REF WATCHES--
--HAVE TO MAKE SURE THIS IS ALL FAIR, AFTER ALL...
...WITH THE SUPER-GLOVES, THE SUPER-SUITE, THE SUPER BOXERS.
LIKE, NO CLINCHES.
CLICK
ZRAIT
BUT FAIR, THAT'S A HARD THING TO DEFINE.
THE OTHER MAN. HE'S STRONG. HE'S POWERFUL. HE'S FOUGHT A LOT OF FIGHTS, AND HE'S WON MOST OF THEM.
MOST OF THEM.
BUT ROMAN WAS BRED TO IT. BRED TO WIN.
AND HE'S NEVER LOST A FIGHT!


IT'S A LOT LIKE BEING HIT BY A TRUCK.
A SMALL TRUCK.
SCANNERS SHOW DANE IS STILL CONSCIOUS. THE JUDGES RULE LAST BLOW TO ROMAN.
FINISH HIM, BOY.
"FINISH HIM." THE WORDS FAIRLY RING IN ROMAN'S EARS.
FINISH HIM.
FINISH HIM.
FINISH HIM!
CONFIRM DANE IS NON-COMBATANT. THE JUDGE RULES...
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
VICTORY TO ROMAN.
BIO-ANALYSIS
HEAD: FRACTURED LEFT OCCIPITAL
BRAIN FUNCTION: ABNORMAL
PHYSICAL STATUS: UNCONSCIOUSNESS
LOSS OF VOLUNTARY MUSCLE CONTROL
TORSO: FRACTURED RIGHT FOURTH RIB
PHYSICAL STATUS: BREATHING IMPAIRED
REQUEST MEDICAL ATTENTION
COUP CONFIRMATION NEGATIVE
NATCH.

AND IN THE MAIN BOOTH...
AN EXCELLENT BOUT, MR. MADISON. YOUR MAN WAS IN PRIME FORM. ABSOLUTELY PRIME.
OF COURSE. I EXPECT NO LESS.
A PITY YOUR MAN, DANE, WAS NOT SO WELL PREPARED, MARILYN.
BETTER LUCK NEXT TIME.
OR... WILL THERE EVEN BE A NEXT TIME, I WONDER.
I... GUESS I DON'T HAVE TO ASK WHO WON?
FAMILIAR FACE?

OUTSIDE.
THEY DON'T HAVE TO HIDE THEMSELVES IN THE UNDERGROUND, THE CORPORATION PEOPLE. THEY'RE NEWS.
MISS HART, DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY ON TONIGHT'S FIGHT?
IS IT TRUE DELCOSMETICS IS IN FINANCIAL TROUBLE, MISS HART?
DIDN'T YOU INVEST AN AWFUL LOT OF CORPORATION MONEY IN THIS FIGHT, MISS HART?
IS IT TRUE YOU'RE BEING PRESSURED TO RESIGN AS PRESIDENT OF OF DELCOS?
HOW MANY LOSERS CAN DELCOS AFFORD, MISS HART?
DO YOU SEE A PROXY BATTLE COMING OUT OF THIS FIGHT, MISS HART?
ALRIGHT, GUYS, FIGHT'S OVER. INTERVIEW'S OVER. PUT IT ALL DOWN AS ONE BIG NO COMMENT.
IS THAT AN OFFICIAL STATEMENT, MR. BRUNNING?
WOULD YOU CARE TO SAY A FEW WORDS OFFICIALLY AS MISS HART'S LAWYER?
MAYBE YOU DIDN'T HEAR ME, BOYS...
I SAID NO COMMENT!


YEAH, THINGS ARE ALWAYS TOUGH FOR THE LOSERS.
FOR THE WINNERS, IT'S ANOTHER MATTER. MAX IS A WINNER.
AND THE WINNER, HE GETS THE GRAVY. HE GETS THE FAME, THE ATTENTION, ALL THE GOOD STUFF.
EVEN THE UNDERGROUND HAS ITS SHARE OF THE GOOD STUFF.
AND MAX... WELL, HE'S JUST ABOUT AS MORTAL AS THE REST OF US, YOU KNOW? HE LIKES TO... LET'S SAY... ENJOY HIMSELF. A LOT.
IT'S GETTING ON FOUR A.M. WHEN HE ROLLS HIS WAY OUT OF THE BOOZ-O-RAMA.

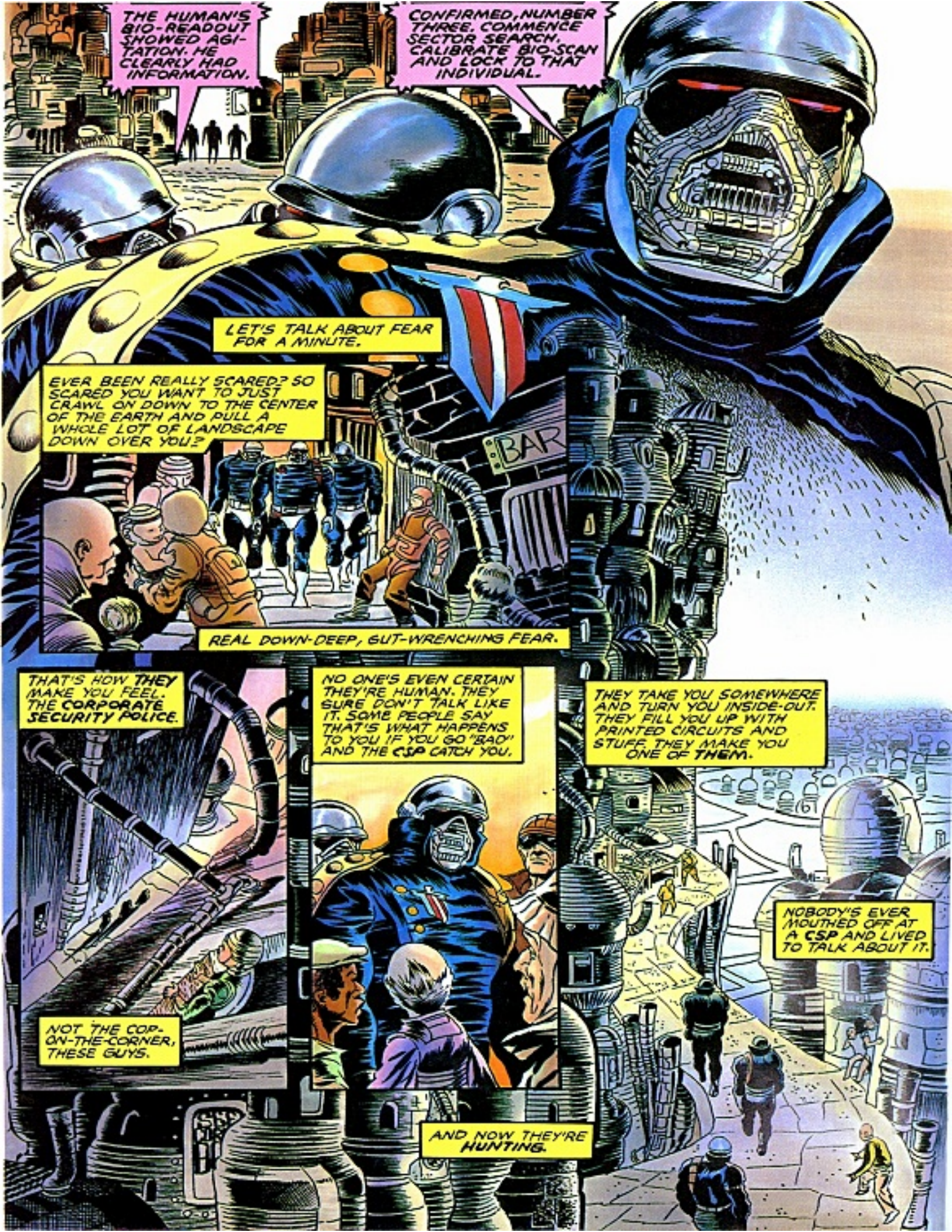
FEELIN' GOOD, FEELIN' NO PAIN.
O-RAMA

HMM? OH, HEY, HI, KID. HOW'D YA LIKE THE FIGHT?

HOW'D I LIKE IT? D'YOU EVEN HAFTA ASK? YOU WERE GREAT, MAX! THE GREATEST!

I MEAN, WOWZER! I'VE SEEN YOU FIGHT SEVENTY-EIGHT TIMES, MAX. THAT'S LIKE A THIRD OF YOUR FIGHTS, RIGHT? I MEAN, YOU'VE HAD OVER TWO HUNDRED, RIGHT?
BUT THIS ONE, MAX! BOY, MAX, THIS WAS BETTER THAN WHEN YOU KAYO-ED GLINZER IN THE FIRST ROUND LAST YEAR.
I MEAN...
I MEAN...
CORP! DOWN!
WOW!!
HEY MAX, GOT A MINUTE FOR AN OLD MAN?
STRAP! HEY, STRAP.
SURE I GOT A MINUTE, STRAP. YOU DON'T EVEN HAFTA ASK, YOU OUGHTA KNOW THAT.
WHAT'S UP?
I BEEN WORRYIN' LATELY, MAX WORRYIN' ABOUT YOU.
I TRAINED A LOTTA FIGHTERS IN MY TIME, MAX. I GOT INTO THIS BIZ BACK IN '45. I SEEN THE BEST. I SEEN CLOMSKI. I SEEN HOUSSEIN. I SEEN FORESTAL. THE BEST.
AN' I SEEN THE CORPORATIONS GROW UP AN' EAT THE WORLD. AN' TAKE OVER THE FIGHTS. TAKE THE FIGHTS AWAY FROM THE LITTLE GUYS.
THE CORPIES HIT A MATCH ON THE OTHER SIDE OF TOWN TONIGHT.
THE SUPER FIGHT
PROFESSIONAL BOXING: MAIN EVENT
BENCLAIR OIL
VS.
THAT'S WHY I'M WORRIED ABOUT YOU, MAX. YOU'RE TOO DAMNED GOOD.
"AN' SOONER OR LATER THE CORPS ARE GONNA FIND OUT ABOUT YA.
"AN' THEY'LL CRUSH YA."

THERE WAS AN ILLEGAL FIGHT HERE TONIGHT.
OUR SCANNERS SHOWED ILLEGAL USE OF POWER.
CSP
WHERE WAS THE FIGHT?
CORPORATE COPS.
GO SUCK YER CIRCUITS, CORPIES!
THE SUFI
I AIN'T TALKIN'!


THE HUMAN'S BIO-READOUT SHOWED AGITATION. HE CLEARLY HAD INFORMATION.
CONFIRMED, NUMBER THREE. COMMENCE SECTOR SEARCH. CALIBRATE BIO-SCAN AND LOCK TO THAT INDIVIDUAL.
LET'S TALK ABOUT FEAR FOR A MINUTE.
EVER BEEN REALLY SCARED? SO SCARED YOU WANT TO JUST CRAWL ON DOWN TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH AND PULL A WHOLE LOT OF LANDSCAPE DOWN OVER YOU?
BAR
REAL DOWN-DEEP, GUT-WRENCHING FEAR.
THAT'S HOW THEY MAKE YOU FEEL. THE CORPORATE SECURITY POLICE.
NOT THE COP-ON-THE-CORNER, THESE GUYS.
NO ONE'S EVEN CERTAIN THEY'RE HUMAN. THEY SURE DON'T TALK LIKE IT. SOME PEOPLE SAY THAT'S WHAT HAPPENS TO YOU IF YOU GO "BAD" AND THE CSP CATCH YOU.
AND NOW THEY'RE HUNTING.
THEY TAKE YOU SOMEWHERE AND TURN YOU INSIDE-OUT. THEY FILL YOU UP WITH PRINTED CIRCUITS AND STUFF. THEY MAKE YOU ONE OF THEM.
NOBODY'S EVER MOUTHED OFF AT A CSP AND LIVED TO TALK ABOUT IT.

BUT WE AREN'T GOING TO FOLLOW THEM. WE'RE GOING UP ABOVE THE UNDERGROUND, WHERE THE AIR IS FRESH AND CLEAN AND COOL.

WHERE ALL THOSE NICE RICH FOLK LIVE -- THE ONES YOU MET A LITTLE WHILE BACK.

THE ONES SCREAMING FOR BLOOD, REMEMBER?

YOUR CALL TO LONDON, MR. MADISON.

THANK YOU, 'PHONE.

IS THAT YOU, CREIGHTON?

YES, MAURICE CREIGHTON HERE. I TAKE IT MARILYN LOST AGAIN. I REALLY CAN'T SAY I'M FULLY BEHIND THIS OPERATION, MADISON. MARILYN AND I... WELL, WE GO BACK A LONG, LONG WAY. SHE WAS MY WIFE, YOU KNOW.

SPARE ME THE LIFE HISTORY, CREIGHTON. I'M ONLY SPEAKING TO YOU TO REMIND YOU OF YOUR ...OBLIGATIONS. A DEBT SUCH AS YOURS IS A BIG BITE TO SWALLOW. I KINDLY OFFERED MY HELP. NOW I ONLY ASK THE SAME OF YOU.

"AND NEXT TIME, PERHAPS YOU'LL BE MORE CAREFUL WHEN YOU GAMBLE."

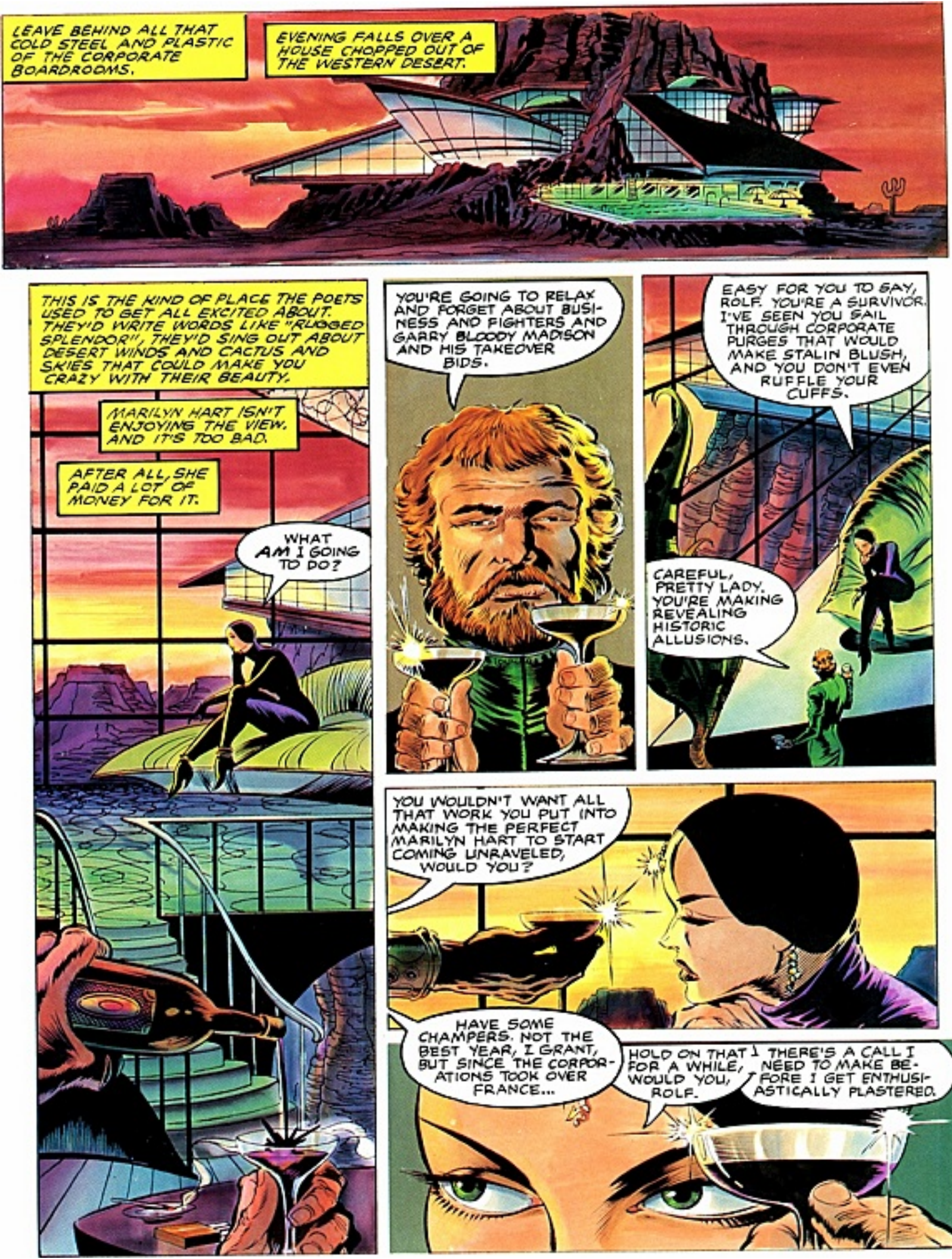
DELCOSMETICS, MARILYN HART -- CHAIRMAN AND PRESIDENT. ONE OF YOUR MAJOR CORPORATIONS HERE.

Delcosmetics

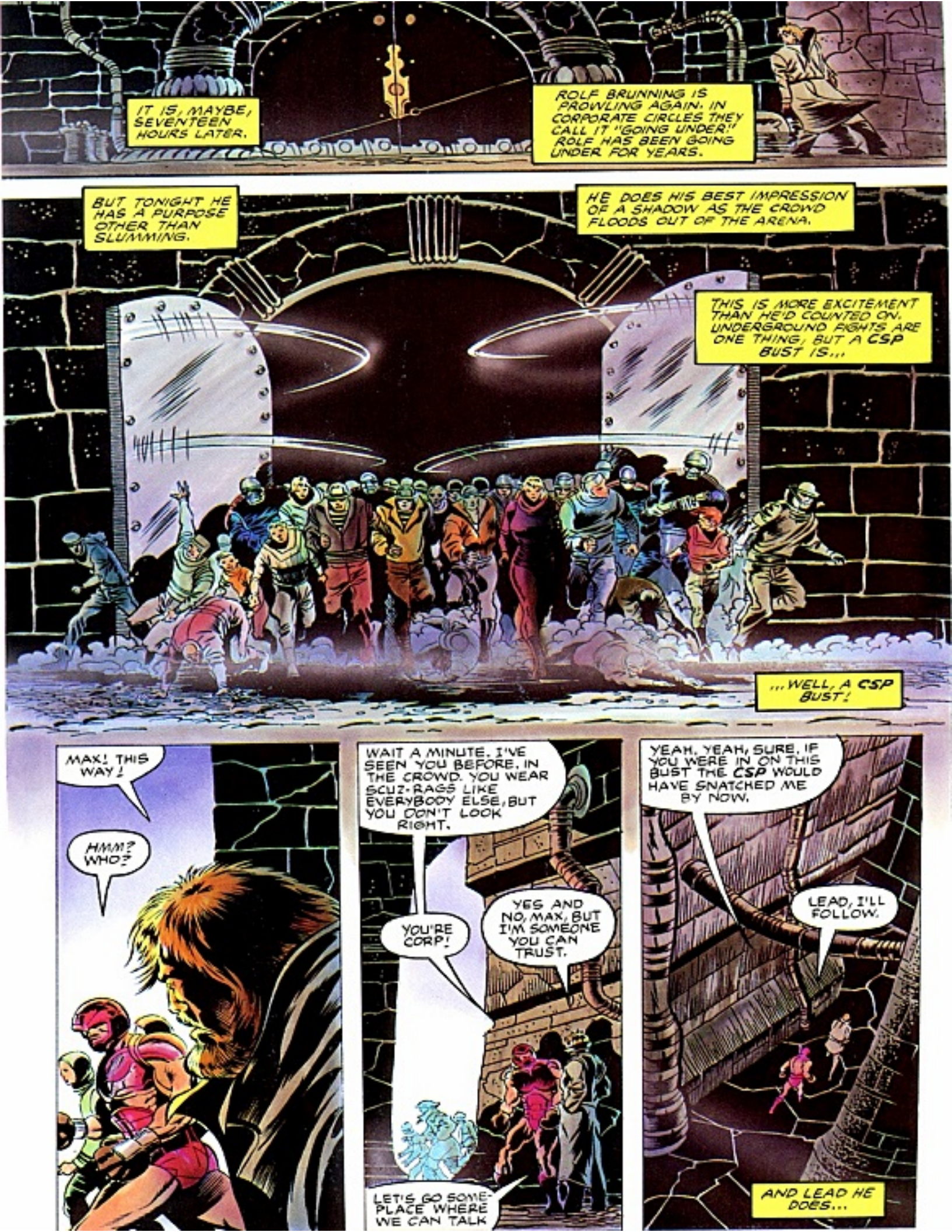
THE CORPORATIONS DEFINE THE LEVELS OF WEALTH, OF PERSONAL CLOUT IN THE WORLD.

DELCOS DEFINES THE CORPORATIONS.

AND MARILYN DEFINES DELCOS.
NOT BAD, HUH? A COSMETIC COMPANY BEING ONE OF THE TOP DOGS, RIGHT UP THERE WITH THE AVTOS, THE SOLARS, THE SHIPPERS.
AND MOSTLY BECAUSE OF THIS ONE WOMAN, PUSHING AND CLAWING AND BEING SO DAMN CLEVER. TAKING HER TINY LITTLE COMPANY AND BUILDING AND BUILDING AND BUILDING, UNTIL IT BLOSSOMED INTO A CORPORATION, AND SUDDENLY THE WORLD SAT UP AND TOOK NOTICE.
AND NOW THEY'RE TRYING TO TAKE IT ALL AWAY FROM HER. THAT'S WHAT SHE'S THINKING...
AND SHE'S RIGHT.
THESE BOARD MEMBERS ARE SCARED--SCARED THAT MARILYN'S LOSSES IN THE BOXING WORLD WILL RUIN DELCOS. RUIN THEM.
BEFORE THEY LET THAT HAPPEN THEY'LL BOOT MARILYN AND THROW IN WITH THE DEVIL FIRST--EVEN GARRY MADISON.
AND THEY WON'T RECALL WHO IT WAS WHO GOT THEM ALL WHERE THEY ARE NOW. IN BIG BUSINESS THERE IS NO YESTERDAY.
ONLY TODAY.
HEY, PRETTY LADY, CAN I BUY YOU A DRINK?
Delcosmetics
OH, ROLF, WHAT AM I GOING TO DO?

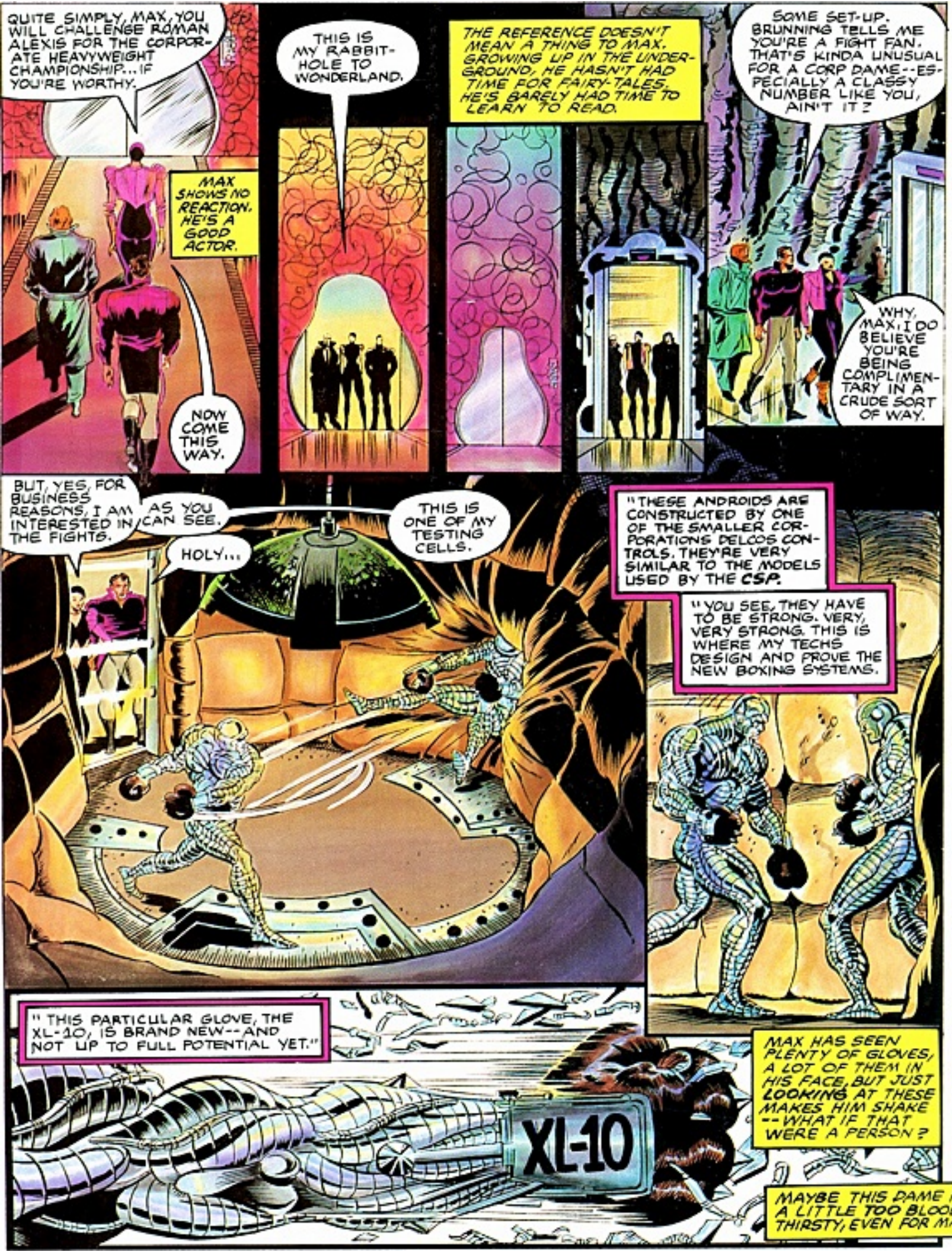

LEAVE BEHIND ALL THAT COLD STEEL AND PLASTIC OF THE CORPORATE BOARDROOMS.
EVENING FALLS OVER A HOUSE CHOPPED OUT OF THE WESTERN DESERT.
THIS IS THE KIND OF PLACE THE POETS USED TO GET ALL EXCITED ABOUT. THEY'D WRITE WORDS LIKE "RUGGED SPLENDOR!", THEY'D SING OUT ABOUT DESERT WINDS AND CACTUS AND SKIES THAT COULD MAKE YOU CRAZY WITH THEIR BEAUTY.
MARILYN HART ISN'T ENJOYING THE VIEW, AND IT'S TOO BAD.
AFTER ALL, SHE PAID A LOT OF MONEY FOR IT.
WHAT AM I GOING TO DO?
YOU'RE GOING TO RELAX AND FORGET ABOUT BUSINESS AND FIGHTERS AND GARRY BLOODY MADISON AND HIS TAKEOVER BIDS.
EASY FOR YOU TO SAY, ROLF. YOU'RE A SURVIVOR. I'VE SEEN YOU SAIL THROUGH CORPORATE PURGES THAT WOULD MAKE STALIN BLUSH, AND YOU DON'T EVEN RUFFLE YOUR CUFFS.
CAREFUL, PRETTY LADY. YOU'RE MAKING REVEALING HISTORIC ALLUSIONS.
YOU WOULDN'T WANT ALL THAT WORK YOU PUT INTO MAKING THE PERFECT MARILYN HART TO START COMING UNRAVELED, WOULD YOU?
HAVE SOME CHAMPERS. NOT THE BEST YEAR, I GRANT, BUT SINCE THE CORPORATIONS TOOK OVER FRANCE...
HOLD ON THAT FOR A WHILE, WOULD YOU, ROLF.
THERE'S A CALL I NEED TO MAKE BEFORE I GET ENTHUSIASTICALLY PLASTERED.

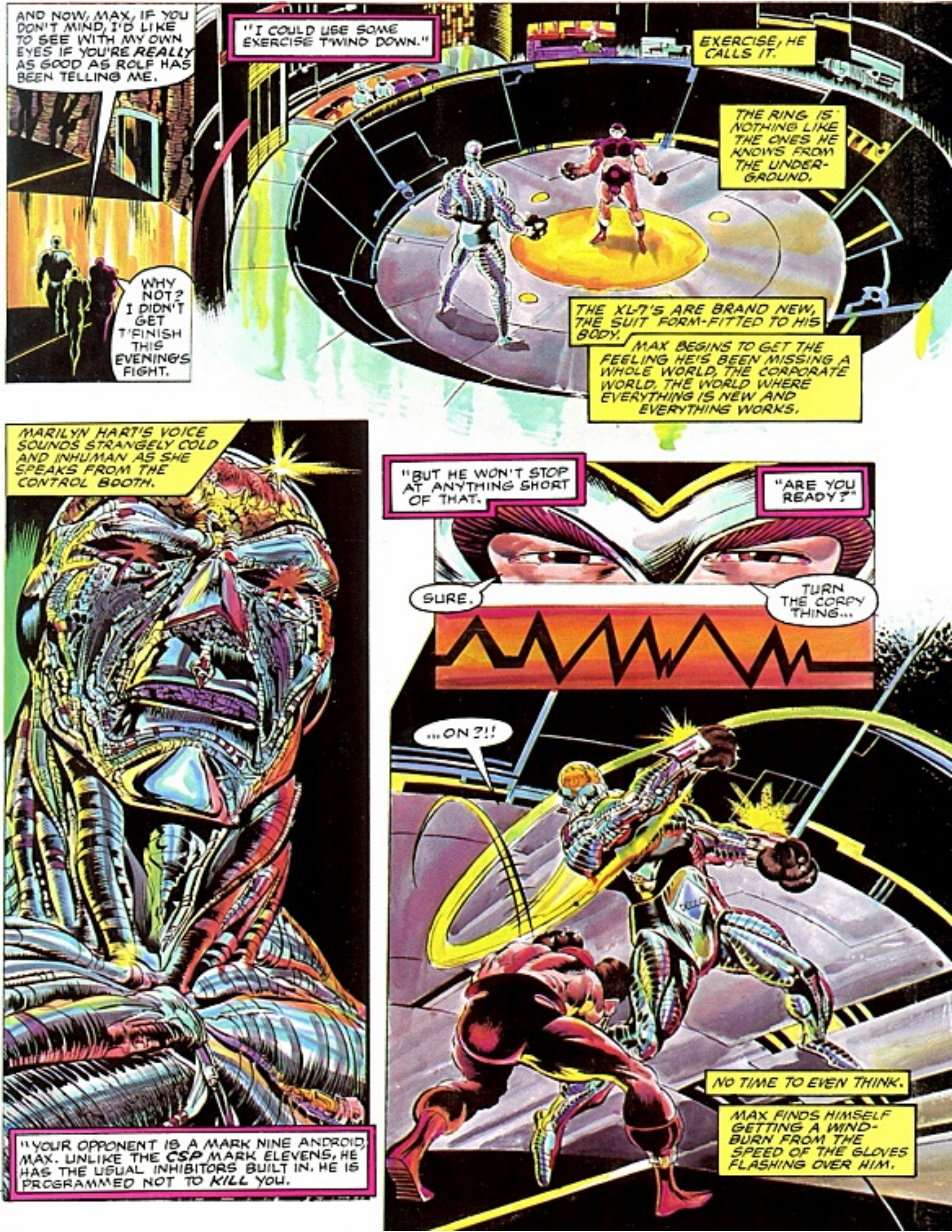
THE INTERNATIONAL SATELLITE LINK HUMS ACROSS THE MILES...
MAURICE, ARE YOU THERE?
I'M ALWAYS HERE, DARLING. HOW ARE YOU?
ANOTHER FAMILIAR FACE...
I'VE SEEN BETTER DAYS, MAURICE. AND YOU WERE THERE FOR MANY OF THEM.
AH, BUT THAT WAS SUCH A LONG, LONG TIME AGO.
DON'T REMIND ME, DEAR HEART. I'M FEELING EVERY DAY OF IT. I THINK YOU CAN GUESS WHY I'VE CALLED. MADISON HAS DELCOS BOXED IN, AND I'M RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE BOX.
IT PAINS ME TO HEAR THE STRAIN IN YOUR VOICE, MARILYN. I ALWAYS THOUGHT IT WAS A MISTAKE WHEN WE WENT OUR SEPARATE WAYS.
BUT THEN, YOUR GREATEST LOVE WAS ALWAYS DELCOS... WHAT DELCOS WAS AND WHAT YOU DREAMED IT COULD BE.
I ONLY STOOD IN THE WAY OF THAT DREAM.
WELL, THE DREAM IS CRUMBLING, MAURICE. AND YOU'RE PERHAPS THE LAST PERSON WHO HAS THE MONEY TO SAVE IT.
I NEED YOUR HELP, MAURICE.
THERE'S NOTHING ELSE OPEN FOR ME.
KRUNG


IT IS, MAYBE, SEVENTEEN HOURS LATER.
ROLF BRUNNING IS PROWLING AGAIN. IN CORPORATE CIRCLES THEY CALL IT "GOING UNDER." ROLF HAS BEEN GOING UNDER FOR YEARS.
BUT TONIGHT HE HAS A PURPOSE OTHER THAN SLUMMING.
HE DOES HIS BEST IMPRESSION OF A SHADOW AS THE CROWD FLOODS OUT OF THE ARENA.
THIS IS MORE EXCITEMENT THAN HE'D COUNTED ON. UNDERGROUND FIGHTS ARE ONE THING, BUT A CSP BUST IS...
...WELL, A CSP BUST!
MAX! THIS WAY!
HMM? WHO?
WAIT A MINUTE. I'VE SEEN YOU BEFORE, IN THE CROWD. YOU WEAR SCUZ-RAGS LIKE EVERYBODY ELSE, BUT YOU DON'T LOOK RIGHT.
YOU'RE CORP!
YES AND NO, MAX, BUT I'M SOMEONE YOU CAN TRUST.
LET'S GO SOMEPLACE WHERE WE CAN TALK
YEAH, YEAH, SURE. IF YOU WERE IN ON THIS BUST THE CSP WOULD HAVE SNATCHED ME BY NOW.
LEAD, I'LL FOLLOW.
AND LEAD HE DOES...

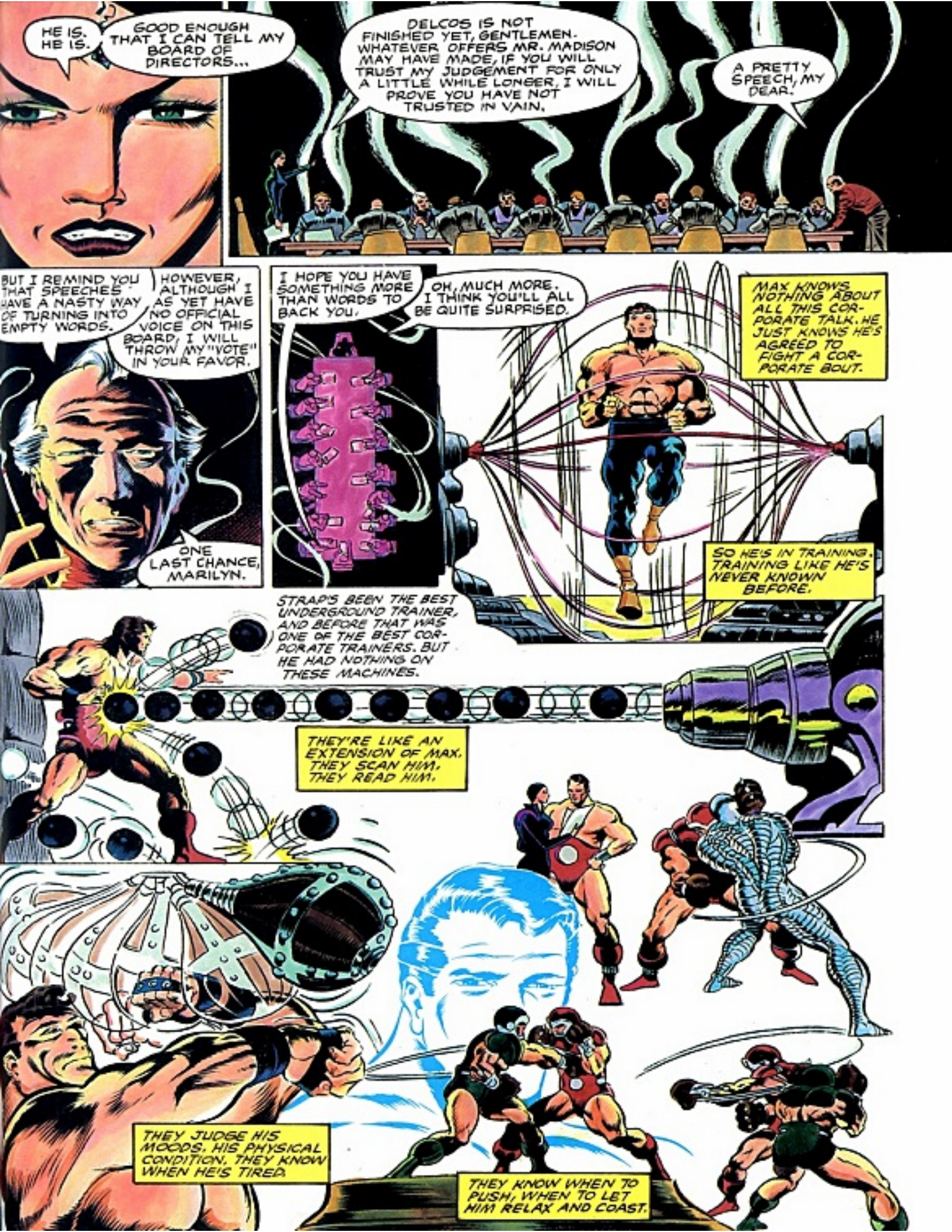
...TO A BOOZE HALL SO LOW AND CRUMMY EVEN MAX FEELS LIKE HE'S SLUMMING.
I KNOW WHO YOU ARE, MAX. I'VE BEEN WATCHING YOU FOR SOME YEARS.
I'VE NEVER SEEN A FIGHTER LIKE YOU. TWO HUNDRED FIGHTS. TWO HUNDRED KNOCK-OUTS. EIGHT TECHNICALS. TWO DRAWS.
YOU SOME KIND OF STATS FREAK, OR WHAT?
NO, MAX, I'M A CORPORATE LAWYER... TRUE, I'M A VERY RICH MAN, BUT PERHAPS, LIKE YOU, I DISLIKE THE WAY THE CORPORATIONS RUN THE WORLD. AND, LIKE YOU, I DO NOTHING ABOUT IT.
MY PERSONAL BENT IS NOT TOWARD REVOLUTION. BUT I HAPPEN TO WORK FOR A LADY WHO'S A REBEL IN HER OWN WAY.
I THINK YOU COULD BE EXACTLY THE WEAPON SHE'S LOOKING FOR.
NO DEAL, CORP-FACE. MAX STAYS DOWN-UNDER.
AH YES, I THOUGHT I MIGHT HAVE TO DEAL WITH THE LIKES OF YOU.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO DEAL WITH NOBODY, LAWYER. BOSS, TAKE A HIKE.
NOT UNTIL I FIND OUT WHAT THIS PRETTY-BOY WANTS WITH YOU, MAX. WE OWN YOU, REMEMBER?
WE'LL TAKE OUR DISCUSSION ELSEWHERE.
NO.
MAX APPARENTLY DISAGREES MISTER... BOSS? SO IF YOU'LL EXCUSE US..
HE'S CORPY.
I DON'T MESS WITH NO CORPIES.

BACK TO MARILYN'S DESERT ROOST, NOW.
OVER THE YEARS THIS TREATMENT HAS BECOME AS ROUTINE AS BREATHING.
THIS TIME IT PREPARES HER TO MEET...
MAX, ROLF HAS TOLD ME A GREAT DEAL ABOUT YOU.
I MUST SAY YOU LIVE UP TO HIS ADVANCE PUBLICITY.
YEAH? EVEN SQUIRMIN' AROUND IN THIS MONKEY SUIT?
GET USED TO IT, MAX. IF YOU ACCEPT OUR OFFER YOU'LL END UP WITH A CLOSETFUL.
HE IS IMPRESSIVE. THE WAY HE MOVES-- THE WAY HE SIMPLY STANDS.
THE POWER. THE SHEER CUNNING IN THOSE EYES.
YEAH, WELL MAYBE, MAYBE NOT.
SO... HOW ABOUT FILLIN' ME IN ON THE REST OF THIS DEAL YOU GOT?


QUITE SIMPLY, MAX, YOU WILL CHALLENGE ROMAN ALEXIS FOR THE CORPORATE HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP... IF YOU'RE WORTHY.
MAX SHOWS NO REACTION. HE'S A GOOD ACTOR.
NOW COME THIS WAY.
THIS IS MY RABBIT-HOLE TO WONDERLAND.
THE REFERENCE DOESN'T MEAN A THING TO MAX. GROWING UP IN THE UNDERGROUND, HE HASN'T HAD TIME FOR FAIRY-TALES, HE'S BARELY HAD TIME TO LEARN TO READ.
SOME SET-UP. BRUNNING TELLS ME YOU'RE A FIGHT FAN. THAT'S KINDA UNUSUAL FOR A CORP DAME--ESPECIALLY A CLASSY NUMBER LIKE YOU, AIN'T IT?
WHY, MAX, I DO BELIEVE YOU'RE BEING COMPLIMENTARY IN A CRUDE SORT OF WAY.
BUT, YES, FOR BUSINESS REASONS, I AM INTERESTED IN THE FIGHTS.
AS YOU CAN SEE.
HOLY...
THIS IS ONE OF MY TESTING CELLS.
"THESE ANDROIDS ARE CONSTRUCTED BY ONE OF THE SMALLER CORPORATIONS DELCOS CONTROLS. THEY'RE VERY SIMILAR TO THE MODELS USED BY THE CSP.
"YOU SEE, THEY HAVE TO BE STRONG. VERY, VERY STRONG. THIS IS WHERE MY TECHS DESIGN AND PROVE THE NEW BOXING SYSTEMS.
"THIS PARTICULAR GLOVE, THE XL-10, IS BRAND NEW--AND NOT UP TO FULL POTENTIAL YET."
XL-10
MAX HAS SEEN PLENTY OF GLOVES, A LOT OF THEM IN HIS FACE, BUT JUST LOOKING AT THESE MAKES HIM SHAKE --WHAT IF THAT WERE A PERSON?
MAYBE THIS DAME IS A LITTLE TOO BLOODTHIRSTY, EVEN FOR MAX

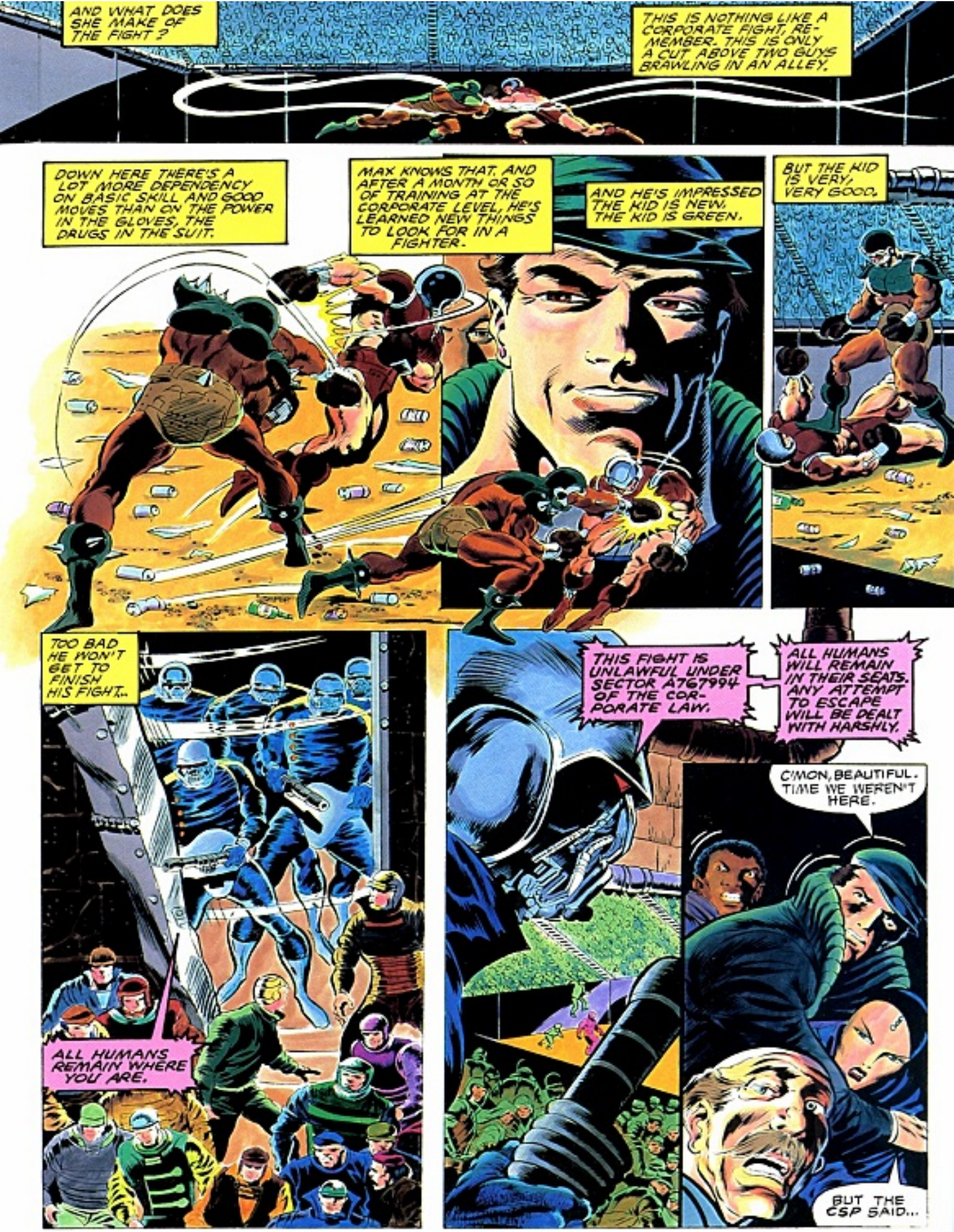

AND NOW, MAX, IF YOU DON'T MIND, I'D LIKE TO SEE WITH MY OWN EYES IF YOU'RE REALLY AS GOOD AS ROLF HAS BEEN TELLING ME.
WHY NOT? I DIDN'T GET T'FINISH THIS EVENING'S FIGHT.
"I COULD USE SOME EXERCISE TWIND DOWN."
EXERCISE, HE CALLS IT.
THE RING IS NOTHING LIKE THE ONES HE KNOWS FROM THE UNDER-GROUND.
THE XL-7'S ARE BRAND NEW, THE SUIT FORM-FITTED TO HIS BODY.
MAX BEGINS TO GET THE FEELING HE'S BEEN MISSING A WHOLE WORLD, THE CORPORATE WORLD, THE WORLD WHERE EVERYTHING IS NEW AND EVERYTHING WORKS.
MARILYN HART'S VOICE SOUNDS STRANGELY COLD AND INHUMAN AS SHE SPEAKS FROM THE CONTROL BOOTH.
"YOUR OPPONENT IS A MARK NINE ANDROID, MAX. UNLIKE THE CSP MARK ELEVENS, HE HAS THE USUAL INHIBITORS BUILT IN. HE IS PROGRAMMED NOT TO KILL YOU.
"BUT HE WON'T STOP AT ANYTHING SHORT OF THAT.
"ARE YOU READY?"
SURE.
TURN THE CORPY THING...
...ON?!!
NO TIME TO EVEN THINK.
MAX FINDS HIMSELF GETTING A WIND-BURN FROM THE SPEED OF THE GLOVES FLASHING OVER HIM.

BUT, POWERFUL AS THE THING IS, IT ISN'T HUMAN. IT ISN'T A REAL FIGHTER.
AND IT SURE AS HELL DIDN'T COME UP THROUGH THE UNDERGROUND THE WAY MAX DID.
IT LEAVES ITSELF OPEN.
ONLY ONCE.
ONLY FOR A HALF SECOND.
PLENTY OF TIME.
WITH THE GLOVES POURING POWER THROUGH HIS LIMBS AND THE SYNTHO-ORENALIN DRIPPING INTO HIM FROM THE SUIT INCREASING HIS NATURAL STRENGTH AND SPEED, MAX STOPS HIS OPPONENT.
JUST LIKE SO MANY OTHERS.
YOU SEE? THE MARK NINE NEVER HAD A CHANCE. I TOLD YOU. HE'S GOOD!

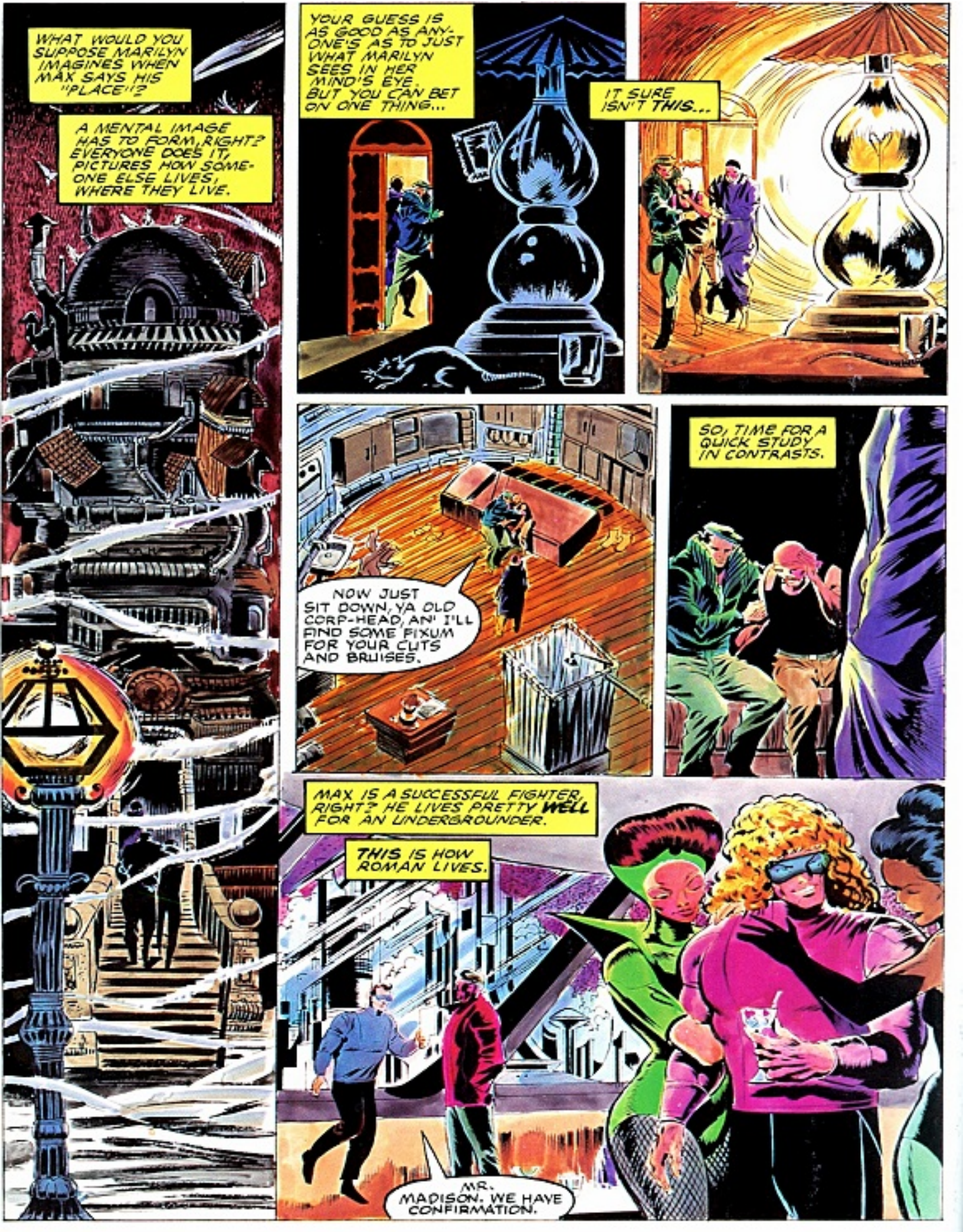

HE IS. HE IS.
GOOD ENOUGH THAT I CAN TELL MY BOARD OF DIRECTORS...
DELCOS IS NOT FINISHED YET, GENTLEMEN. WHATEVER OFFERS MR. MADISON MAY HAVE MADE, IF YOU WILL TRUST MY JUDGEMENT FOR ONLY A LITTLE WHILE LONGER, I WILL PROVE YOU HAVE NOT TRUSTED IN VAIN.
A PRETTY SPEECH, MY DEAR.
BUT I REMIND YOU THAT SPEECHES HAVE A NASTY WAY OF TURNING INTO EMPTY WORDS.
HOWEVER, ALTHOUGH I AS YET HAVE NO OFFICIAL VOICE ON THIS BOARD, I WILL THROW MY "VOTE" IN YOUR FAVOR.
ONE LAST CHANCE, MARILYN.
I HOPE YOU HAVE SOMETHING MORE THAN WORDS TO BACK YOU.
OH, MUCH MORE. I THINK YOU'LL ALL BE QUITE SURPRISED.
MAX KNOWS NOTHING ABOUT ALL THIS CORPORATE TALK. HE JUST KNOWS HE'S AGREED TO FIGHT A CORPORATE BOUT.
SO HE'S IN TRAINING. TRAINING LIKE HE'S NEVER KNOWN BEFORE.
STRAP'S BEEN THE BEST UNDERGROUND TRAINER, AND BEFORE THAT WAS ONE OF THE BEST CORPORATE TRAINERS. BUT HE HAD NOTHING ON THESE MACHINES.
THEY'RE LIKE AN EXTENSION OF MAX. THEY SCAN HIM. THEY READ HIM.
THEY JUDGE HIS MOODS. HIS PHYSICAL CONDITION. THEY KNOW WHEN HE'S TIRED.
THEY KNOW WHEN TO PUSH, WHEN TO LET HIM RELAX AND COAST.

THEY KNOW WHEN HE NEEDS TO BE LET LOOSE, TO LET HIS STRENGTH OUT, WITHOUT THE SUPER-GLOVES, WITHOUT THE SYNTHO-DRENALIN.
AND THEY KNOW WHEN HE NEEDS TO BE KNOCKED DOWN, TO HAVE THE WIND THUMPED OUT OF HIS SAILS.
ALL OF THIS, TO MAX, IS SHEER LUXURY. HE'S GOT THREE MONTHS TO TRAIN FOR THE FIGHT. THREE MONTHS!
AND EVEN THOUGH HE KNOWS HIS OPPONENT HAS WON ALL HIS BOUTS, HE DOESN'T SEE ANYTHING TO WORRY ABOUT.
THEN...
BACK TO THE UNDERGROUND? WHY ON EARTH WOULD YOU WANT TO GO BACK THERE, EVEN FOR ONE NIGHT?
'CAUSE THAT'S MY HOME FOR ONE THING. THEM PEOPLE ARE GONNA THINK I'M DEAD IF I DON'T FLASH MY FACE ONCE IN A WHILE.
BESIDES, THERE'S A NEW KID FIGHTING TONIGHT. REALLY GOOD, WORD HAS IT. I'D LIKE TO SEE WHAT HE'S GOT.
YOU WANNA COME?
HOW SWEET. RATHER LIKE A PET ASKING ITS MISTRESS TO TAKE IT FOR WALKIES.
YES. YES, I'LL COME, MAX...
"... IT MIGHT BE AMUSING."

NOW, THINK ABOUT THIS...
THIS IS MARILYN HART. SHE'S ONE OF THE RICHEST PEOPLE ON EARTH.
SHE'S NEVER WORN CLOTHING THAT WASN'T BODY-SCULPTED TO FIT HER FIGURE, NEVER WALKED ON SIDEWALKS THAT WEREN'T SHOCK-CUSHIONED SO YOU HARDLY NOTICE YOUR FEET HITTING THEM...
ARENA
SEWER HOME
...NEVER BREATHED AIR THAT WASN'T SANITIZED AND PASTEURIZED AND HOMOGENIZED.
AND NOW WHERE IS SHE? IN THE UNDERGROUND, WITH MAX... WITH UNDERGROUND CLOTHES OVER HER OWN SKIN-SUIT.
MAX! HEY, IT'S MAX!
WE THOUGHT YOU'D GONE CORPY ON US, CHAMP.
NAH. MAX WOULDN'T DO THAT. WOULD YA, MAX?
NOT ME, KID. LISTEN, CATCH YA LATER, OKAY?
I GOTTA FIND...
...STRAP. GOT SOMEONE I WANT YA T'MEET.
"SEWER HOME" 714 ARENA AREA
NO ONE CAN REMEMBER A TIME WHEN STRAP WAS AT A LOSS FOR WORDS.
UNTIL NOW. FINALLY...
YEAH, HIYA MISS. MAX, THIS CORPY GAL... SHE THE REASON YOU'VE BEEN MAKIN' LIKE THE INVISIBLE MAN, FERGETTIN' YOUR OLD PALS?
OH, CAN IT, STRAP. I CAME BACK TO TALK TO YOU AS MUCH AS TO SEE THIS FIGHT BUT...
C'MON, MARILYN. SOME PEOPLE JUST DON'T LIKE TO SEE OTHER FOLK GET AHEAD IN THE WORLD.
SEWER HOME 714 ARENA AREA
NOW, IF THE OUTSIDE WAS STRANGE FOR MARILYN, TRY TO PUT YOURSELF IN HER PLACE INSIDE THE ARENA.
RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE PRESS AND STINK AND SPILLED BEER.

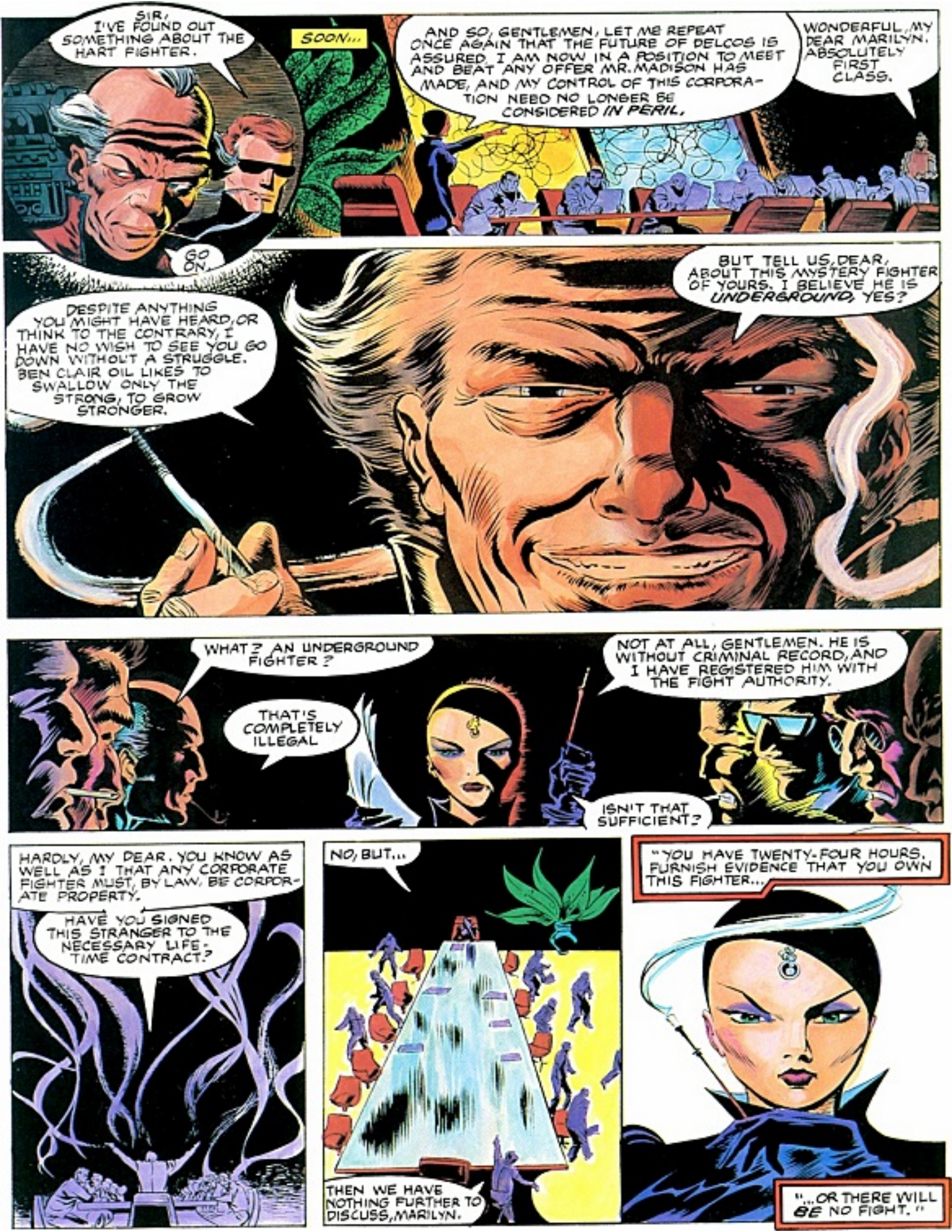

AND WHAT DOES SHE MAKE OF THE FIGHT?
THIS IS NOTHING LIKE A CORPORATE FIGHT, REMEMBER. THIS IS ONLY A CUT ABOVE TWO GUYS BRAWLING IN AN ALLEY.
DOWN HERE THERE'S A LOT MORE DEPENDENCY ON BASIC SKILL AND GOOD MOVES THAN ON THE POWER IN THE GLOVES, THE DRUGS IN THE SUIT.
MAX KNOWS THAT. AND AFTER A MONTH OR SO OF TRAINING AT THE CORPORATE LEVEL, HE'S LEARNED NEW THINGS TO LOOK FOR IN A FIGHTER.
AND HE'S IMPRESSED THE KID IS NEW. THE KID IS GREEN.
BUT THE KID IS VERY, VERY GOOD.
TOO BAD HE WON'T GET TO FINISH HIS FIGHT...
ALL HUMANS REMAIN WHERE YOU ARE.
THIS FIGHT IS UNLAWFUL UNDER SECTOR A767994 OF THE CORPORATE LAW.
ALL HUMANS WILL REMAIN IN THEIR SEATS. ANY ATTEMPT TO ESCAPE WILL BE DEALT WITH HARSHLY.
C'MON, BEAUTIFUL. TIME WE WEREN'T HERE.
BUT THE CSP SAID...

"I HEARD 'EM. I ALSO SEEN WHAT HAPPENS TO PEOPLE WHO DO WHAT THEY'RE TOLD..."
...SO DON'T ARGUE OR I'LL CARRY YOU OUT.
THE NEXT FEW SECONDS ARE HOURS OF NIGHTMARE FOR MARILYN.
SHE HAS NEVER BEEN PUSHED, SHOVED, BUMPED, THUMPED, TRIPPED...
YOU GET THE PICTURE.
THIS WAY LEADS TO THE STREET. MOST OF THE PASSAGES ARE TOO SKINNY FOR THE CSP TO GET THROUGH.
AND SO...
MAX, THIS IS MADNESS! THE CSP ARE THE OFFICIAL LAW-ENFORCEMENT AGENCY. RUNNING FROM THEM IS A VIOLATION OF FEDERAL STATUTES.
AN' STANDIN' AROUND WAITIN' FOR THEM TO BASH MY BRAINS OUT WOULD BE A VIOLATION OF MY SKULL! NOW...
URGH!
STRAP!
OH, GEEZ, STRAP, WHAT HAPPENED?
WHADDAYA THINK HAPPENED?
YER CORPY COP FRIENDS DID A LITTLE DANCE ON MY HEAD. YOU SHOULDA BIN THERE. THEIR MOVES WERE REAL GOOD. YOU MIGHTA LEARNED SOMETHING.
QUIET, STRAP. C'MON MARILYN, WE'VE GOTTA GET OFF THE STREETS. MY PLACE AIN'T FAR FROM HERE.


WHAT WOULD YOU SUPPOSE MARILYN IMAGINES WHEN MAX SAYS HIS "PLACE"?
A MENTAL IMAGE HAS TO FORM, RIGHT? EVERYONE DOES IT, PICTURES HOW SOMEONE ELSE LIVES, WHERE THEY LIVE.
YOUR GUESS IS AS GOOD AS ANYONE'S AS TO JUST WHAT MARILYN SEES IN HER MIND'S EYE. BUT YOU CAN BET ON ONE THING...
IT SURE ISN'T THIS...
NOW JUST SIT DOWN, YA OLD CORP-HEAD, AN' I'LL FIND SOME FIXUM FOR YOUR CUTS AND BRUISES.
SO, TIME FOR A QUICK STUDY IN CONTRASTS.
MAX IS A SUCCESSFUL FIGHTER, RIGHT? HE LIVES PRETTY WELL FOR AN UNDERGROUNDER.
THIS IS HOW ROMAN LIVES.
MR. MADISON. WE HAVE CONFIRMATION.

CONFIRMATION? WHAT HAVE YOUR SPIES BEEN TURNING UP THIS TIME?
INFORMATION BEST KEPT STRICTLY TO THOSE EARS WHICH IT CONCERNS, MY DEAR ROMAN. SEND THE LADIES AWAY FOR NOW.
HE DOES.
NOW WHAT'S SO IMPORTANT THAT IT'S WORTH INSULTING MY FRIENDS?
MATTERS OF GREATER URGENCY THAN YOUR HORMONES, BOY.
MARILYN HART HAS APPARENTLY FOUND HERSELF A CHAMPION. POSSIBLY AN ILLEGAL, SINCE MY AGENTS ARE UNABLE TO TURN UP ANY INFORMATION ABOUT HIM.
HE MAY BE DIFFICULT TO... INFLUENCE.
INFLUENCE? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? INFLUENCE-- AS IN FIX? I FIGHT ONLY CLEAN. I DON'T NEED YOUR TRICKS TO WIN, AND I'LL REPORT YOU TO THE COMMISSION IF I FIND OUT YOU'RE FIXING FIGHTS.
OH, WILL YOU, INDEED?
WELL, ROMAN, DEAR BOY, YOU ARE TWENTY-FOUR YEARS OF AGE, IN THE ABSOLUTE PRIME, AND I THINK IT'S TIME YOU LEARNED THE FACTS OF LIFE.
YOU EXIST ONLY BECAUSE I DESIRE THAT YOU EXIST. YOU ARE CHAMPION ONLY BECAUSE IT IS MY WISH THAT YOU BE CHAMPION.
WITHOUT ME, DEAR BOY, YOU ARE LITERALLY NOTHING. YOU WOULD NEVER EVEN HAVE BEEN BORN.
SO LET'S NOT HAVE ANY DISPLACED NOBILITY SUDDENLY CLOUDING THAT WONDERFULLY BLANK CANVASS YOU HAVE FOR A BRAIN, ROMAN.
YOU WILL DO WHAT I TELL YOU TO DO-- WHEN, WHERE AND HOW I TELL YOU TO DO IT.
NOW, CALL BACK YOUR LITTLE FRIENDS.

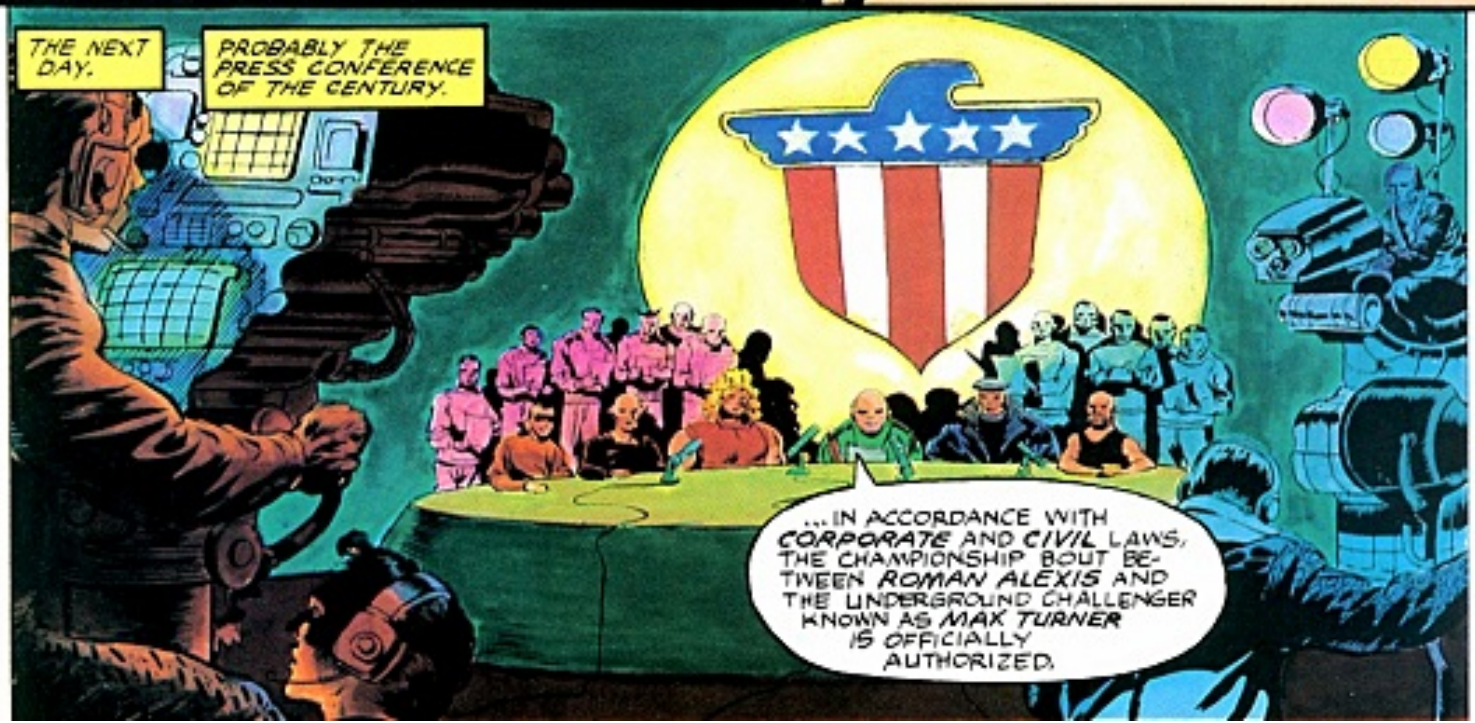
PERHAPS THEY CAN SOOTHE YOUR TROUBLED BROW.
SHOW HIM HOW LOVING YOU CAN BE, GIRLS. OUR CHAMPION HAS JUST LEARNED A VERY HARD LESSON OF LIFE.
AMAZING.
FOR ONE BRIEF MOMENT IT SEEMED ROMAN WAS SHOWING SIGNS OF SELF-WILL.
AS THE END PRODUCT OF OVER THIRTY YEARS OF SELECTIVE GENE CROSSING, ALL SUCH TENDENCIES SHOULD HAVE BEEN SAFELY BRED OUT OF HIM.
WELL, IT MATTERS NOT. HE CAN ALWAYS BE DISPOSED OF, OR AT THE VERY LEAST PUT OUT TO STUD.
GARRY MADISON KNOWS HOW TO DEAL WITH A STREAK OF INDEPENDENCE.
IN THE DAYS THAT FOLLOW, ROMAN HAS NO TIME FOR THAT SORT OF STUFF. NO TIME TO THINK.
JUST REACT.
ROMAN IS KEPT VERY, VERY BUSY.
XL7
ROMAN MAY BE THE BEST, BUT THIS NEW FIGHTER IS A MYSTERY. AND MADISON DOESN'T GAMBLE. HE MAKES BUSINESS DECISIONS. AND HE'S DECIDED TO DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO INSURE ROMAN'S SUCCESS. AND HIS OWN.


SIR, I'VE FOUND OUT SOMETHING ABOUT THE HART FIGHTER.
SOON...
AND SO, GENTLEMEN, LET ME REPEAT ONCE AGAIN THAT THE FUTURE OF DELCOS IS ASSURED. I AM NOW IN A POSITION TO MEET AND BEAT ANY OFFER MR. MADISON HAS MADE, AND MY CONTROL OF THIS CORPORATION NEBO NO LONGER BE CONSIDERED IN PERIL.
WONDERFUL, MY DEAR MARILYN. ABSOLUTELY FIRST CLASS.
GO ON.
DESPITE ANYTHING YOU MIGHT HAVE HEARD, OR THINK TO THE CONTRARY, I HAVE NO WISH TO SEE YOU GO DOWN WITHOUT A STRUGGLE. BEN CLAIR OIL LIKES TO SWALLOW ONLY THE STRONG, TO GROW STRONGER.
BUT TELL US, DEAR, ABOUT THIS MYSTERY FIGHTER OF YOURS. I BELIEVE HE IS UNDERGROUND, YES?
WHAT? AN UNDERGROUND FIGHTER?
THAT'S COMPLETELY ILLEGAL
NOT AT ALL, GENTLEMEN. HE IS WITHOUT CRIMINAL RECORD, AND I HAVE REGISTERED HIM WITH THE FIGHT AUTHORITY.
ISN'T THAT SUFFICIENT?
HARDLY, MY DEAR. YOU KNOW AS WELL AS I THAT ANY CORPORATE FIGHTER MUST, BY LAW, BE CORPORATE PROPERTY.
HAVE YOU SIGNED THIS STRANGER TO THE NECESSARY LIFE-TIME CONTRACT?
NO, BUT...
THEN WE HAVE NOTHING FURTHER TO DISCUSS, MARILYN.
"YOU HAVE TWENTY-FOUR HOURS, FURNISH EVIDENCE THAT YOU OWN THIS FIGHTER...
"...OR THERE WILL BE NO FIGHT."

"OR THERE WILL BE NO FIGHT!"
IT'S EIGHTEEN HOURS LATER, AT THE DELCOSMETICS CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS, AND THOSE WORDS ARE STILL POUNDING IN MARILYN'S HEAD. SHE'S REACHED THE ABSOLUTE END OF HER ROPE, NOW, AND SHE KNOWS IT.
AND SHE KNOWS WITHOUT THE FIGHT HER FORMER HUSBAND, CREIGHTON, WILL WITHDRAW THE FINANCIAL BACKING THAT SHE'S USING TO FEND OFF MADISON'S TAKEOVER BID.
AND SHE KNOWS EVEN WITH THE FIGHT, DELCOS WILL BELONG TO CREIGHTON SHOULD SHE BE UNABLE TO PAY OFF HIS LOAN IN THE EVENT THAT MAX LOSES.
SHE DOESN'T KNOW THAT CREIGHTON WOULD THEN TURN AROUND AND GIVE DELCOS TO MADISON.
AND SHE DOESN'T KNOW IF SHE CAN GET MAX'S SIGNATURE ON A CORPORATE CONTRACT.
BUT SHE'S SURE GOING TO TRY.
SO THIS IS HOW YOU CORPIES HAVE A GOOD TIME. NOT BAD. DON'T SEE NONE O' YER WORKIN' STIFFS HERE, THOUGH.
THEY'RE WELL PROVIDED FOR, MAX. I HAVE SOMETHING TO... DISCUSS WITH YOU.
LET'S STEP INTO MY PRIVATE OFFICE.

LISTEN TO ME NOW, MAX. THERE'S SOMETHING VERY, VERY IMPORTANT I HAVE TO TELL YOU.
NO THAT'S NOT TRUE. I DON'T HAVE TO TELL YOU ANYTHING, BUT I WANT TO TELL YOU. BECAUSE... BECAUSE...
BECAUSE OF HOW WE... FEEL...
N-NO. NO, MAX, DON'T. I... LIKE YOU. I LIKE YOU... VERY MUCH... TOO MUCH...
BUT... BUT I'M TALKING BUSINESS NOW. VERY IMPORTANT BUSINESS. CORPORATE BUSINESS.
I... WANT YOU TO SIGN THIS, MAX. IT'S NOTHING IMPORTANT. NOT REALLY.
BUT WITHOUT IT YOU CAN'T FIGHT ROMAN. YOU CAN'T FIGHT ANYONE.
SO HE SIGNS.
WOULDN'T YOU? HE TRUSTS HER. HE'S GOT NO REASON NOT TO.
THANK YOU... MAX. YOU... DON'T KNOW... HOW MUCH...
HEY, LISTEN, I...
NO. DON'T SAY ANYTHING, MAX. PLEASE DON'T.
JUST PROMISE ME...

...THAT WHATEVER HAPPENS NOW...
...YOU'LL ALWAYS...
...LOVE ME...


THE NEXT DAY.
PROBABLY THE PRESS CONFERENCE OF THE CENTURY.
...IN ACCORDANCE WITH CORPORATE AND CIVIL LAWS, THE CHAMPIONSHIP BOUT BETWEEN ROMAN ALEXIS AND THE UNDERGROUND CHALLENGER KNOWN AS MAX TURNER IS OFFICIALLY AUTHORIZED.

LOOK AT HIM. HE LOOKS LIKE A PIECE OF GRANITE. THOSE HANDS...SO ROUGH. THE KNUCKLES SCRAPED, RAW. WHAT CAN IT BE LIKE FIGHTING *DOWN THERE*--FIGHTING IN THE UNDERGROUND.
Y'LOOK GOOD, ROMAN. TOUGH. STRONG. BUT SOFT. LOTS OF SOFT SPOTS. YOU WORRY ME SOME... BUT YOU DON'T SCARE ME.
BEFORE WE OPEN THIS CONFERENCE TO THE USUAL QUESTIONS FROM THE PRESS GALLERY I WOULD LIKE TO HAVE MY LAWYER SAY A FEW WORDS.
A QUESTION, ACTUALLY, FOR MR. TURNER.
ARE WE TO UNDERSTAND THAT HE IS FULLY COGNIZANT OF HIS POSITION? DOES HE UNDERSTAND THAT IF HE LOSES, DELCOS WILL GO BANKRUPT... AND OWNERSHIP OF HIM WILL PASS TO THE RECEIVER?
WHAT'RE YOU YAMMERIN' ABOUT? IF I LOSE... *IF* I LOSE, I JUST GO BACK HOME. NO BIG DEAL.
ON THE CONTRARY, DEAR BOY, I HAVE HERE A COPY OF THE CONTRACT YOU SIGNED FOR MISS HART.
YOU ARE *OWNED* OUTRIGHT BY YOUR OWN PERMISSION.
AND IF DELCOS GOES UNDER, DEAR BOY...
SO DO YOU!
...NO...
YOU *BITCH!* YOU SCHEMING, LYING BITCH! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO ME? WHAT HAVE YOU *DONE?*
MAX, NO! IT'S THE *LAW!*
HANDS OFF, PRETTY BOY! YOU CAN TAKE YOUR LAW...
AND *SHOVE IT!*

YOU... YOU...
WHY? WHY DID YOU TELL HIM?
DO YOU REALLY HAVE TO ASK MY DEAR? I'M NOT ALL THAT INTERESTED IN COSMETICS, AFTER ALL. ASSUMING CONTROL OF DELCOS IS ONLY PART OF THE OVERALL PLAN.
IT'S YOU I WANT, MARILYN. YOU, CRUSHED, HUMILIATED AND DESTROYED.
HIS LAUGHTER IS AWFUL, DIRTY, CLINGING.
MARILYN JUST WANTS TO RUN AND RUN AND RUN UNTIL THERE IS NO MORE GARRY MADISON, NO MORE MAX, NO MORE ROMAN.
NOTHING TO REMIND HER OF WHO SHE WAS AND WHO SHE'S ALLOWED HERSELF TO BECOME.
AND ROMAN...
ROMAN, FOR WHOM THE CORPORATE WORLD IS ALL, ROMAN WHO CAN CONCEIVE OF NO LIFE OUTSIDE THE SMOOTH GLASSTEEL WALLS AND THE BLINDING BITS OF PAPER...
ROMAN IS CONFUSED.
BUT NOT AS CONFUSED AS MAX.

THIS DIVE IS BAD EVEN BY UNDERGROUND STANDARDS. A REAL TRASH BIN.
IT'S TAKEN STRAP ALMOST TWO DAYS TO FIND MAX. TWO DAYS MAX HAS PUT TO GOOD USE.
WELL, WELL, WELL, IF IT AIN'T THE CONQUERING HERO. I DON'T THINK THAT BOTTLE'S BIG ENOUGH FER YOU TO CRAWL INTO, MAX.

THEN I'LL FIND ONE THAT IS. BUGGER OFF, STRAP.
NO.
HEY... GIMME...
OOOMPH.
OH, THAT'S GOOD. THAT'S THEM LIGHTNIN' REFLEXES WE ALL KNOW AN' LOVE.

AW... LEMME ALONE, STRAP. I BEEN...
YOU BEEN BRUISED, IS WHAT. YOU LET DOWN YOUR GUARD, AND THAT FANCY CORPY DAME THREW IN A SNEAK PUNCH, AN' SHE GOT YOU RIGHT WHERE A BIG, DUMB LUMP LIKE YOU HURTS THE MOST.
SHE GOT YOU IN TH' HEART.

WELL, DON'T SIT THERE CRYIN' IN YER BOOZE LIKE YOU'RE THE ONLY GUY IN HISTORY EVER GOT WANKED AROUND BY A DAME. I FEEL FER YOU, MAX. YOU'LL NEVER KNOW HOW MUCH.
BUT THERE'S A HELLUVA LOT MORE AT STAKE HERE THEN YOU GETTING A BIG LESSON IN HUMAN RELATIONS.
YOU'RE GETTIN AWFUL FANCY-TONGUED ALL OF A SUDDEN.

MAYBE. MAYBE I AIN'T JUST THE DUMB OL' WASHED-OUT PUG YOU ALWAYS THOUGHT. MAYBE I GOT A MIND AND A MEMORY. MAYBE I REMEMBER STUFF.
LIKE THE WAY THE WORLD WAS BEFORE THE CORPORATIONS--BEFORE YOU WERE EVEN A GLINT IN YER DADDY'S EYE.
AN' MAYBE I REMEMBER HOW IMPORTANT IT IS THAT WE DON'T COMPLETELY LOSE THE OLD WAYS. AN' REMEMBER THAT MARILYN HART IS MAYBE THE LAST CHANCE WE UNDERGROUND FOLK HAVE.

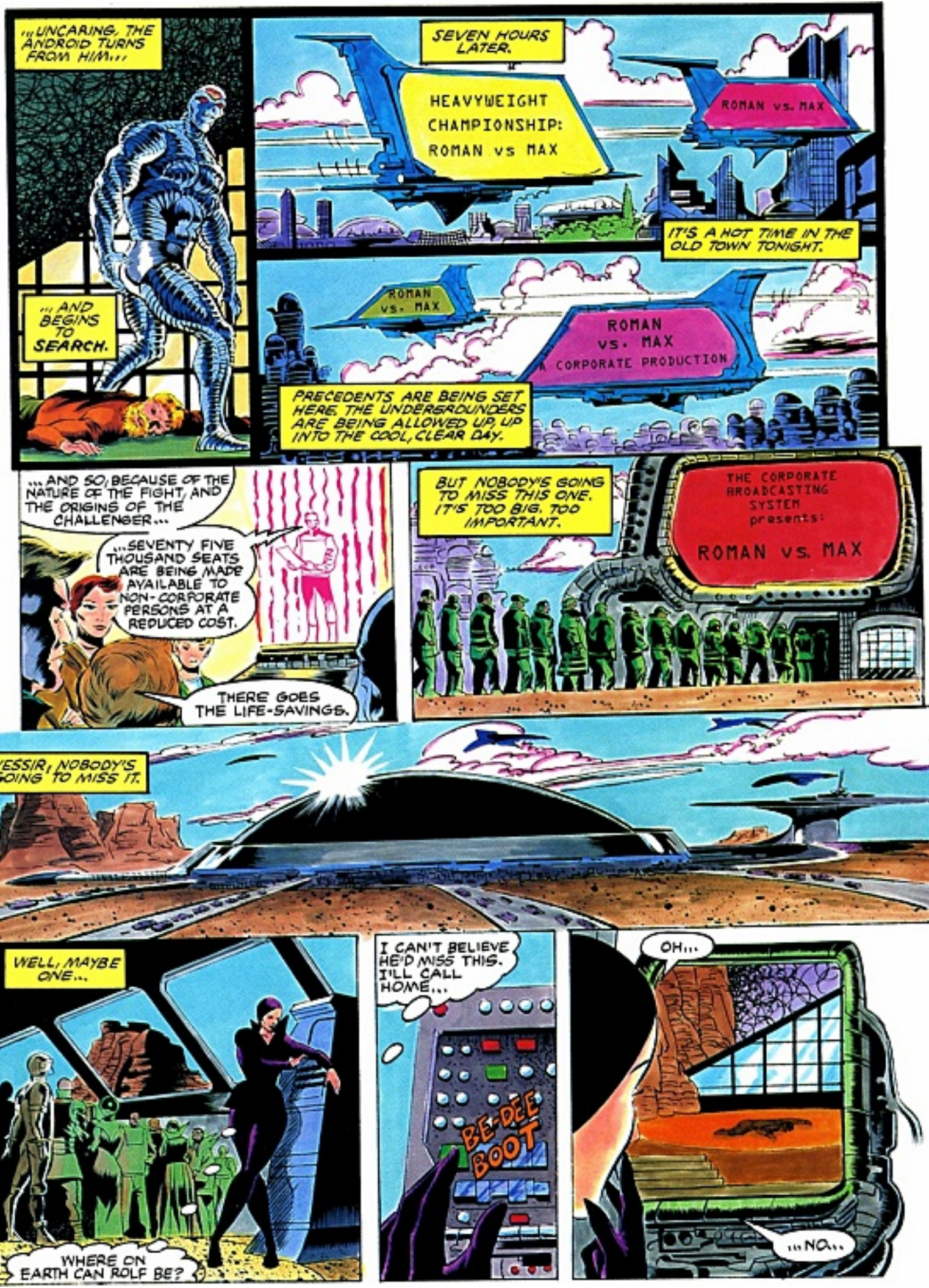
MARILYN? STRAP, WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN SMOKIN'?
I KNOW WHAT I'M SAYIN'.
WHY DO YOU THINK THE OTHER CORPORATIONS ARE AFTER DELCOS SO HARD? WHY DO YOU THINK THEY'RE BACKIN' GARRY MADISON, LETTIN' HIM PUT ALL HIS GUNS OUT T'SMASH HER?

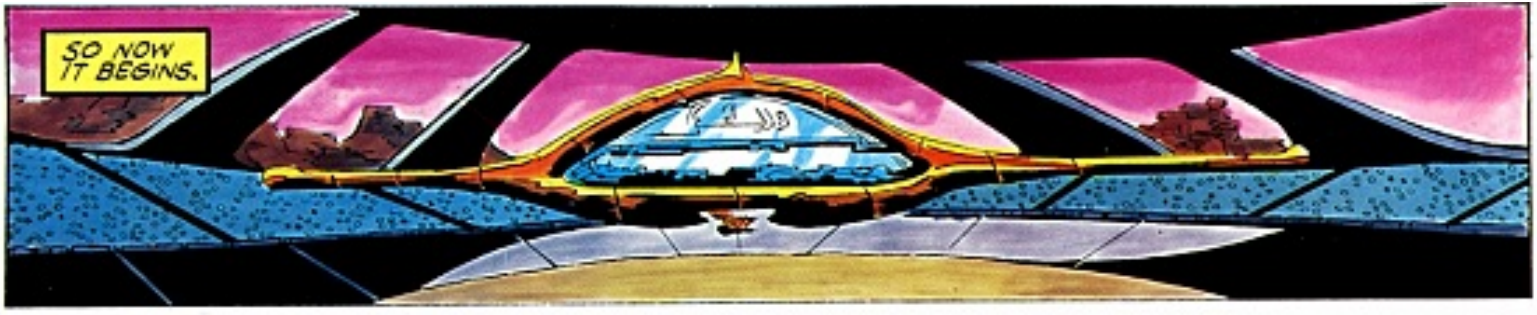
THEY PROTECT THEIR OWN, BOY. THEY DON'T LET NO ONE TAKE NO SHOTS AT NO CORPORATION, NO-HOW, UNLESS THEY FEEL THREATENED THEMSELVES.
THAT'S WHAT MARILYN IS ALL ABOUT, MAX.

SHE'S BEEN TRYING FOR YEARS... MORE YEARS THAN YOU MIGHT GUESS... T'BREAK DOWN THE HARD-ASS RULES OF THE CORPORATIONS, TO GIVE THE WORKERS SOME FREEDOMS, LET FOLKS DECIDE WHAT THEY WANNA DO AND HOW THEY WANNA LIVE, LIKE YEARS AGO.

THAT'S WHY THE OTHER CORPORATIONS WANT HER STOPPED, AN' WHY THEY'RE LETTIN' THAT BASTARD MADISON TRY TO STOP HER.
AN' YOU'RE HER LAST CHANCE, MAX.
MAYBE THE LAST CHANCE FOR THE WHOLE DAMNED UNDERGROUND.

THE NEXT DAY...
I'M AFRAID IT'S CONFIRMED, MR. MADISON.
MAX CAME BACK TO DELCOS' COMPOUND EARLY THIS MORNING. HE'S STILL REFUSING TO SPEAK TO MISS HART...
BUT HE IS GOING TO FIGHT FOR DELCOS.
THEN IT WOULD SEEM YOU, FOR ONE, HAVE FAILED ME, JASPER.
I DO NOT TAKE LIGHTLY TO FAILURE.
SIR, I...
WAIT!
DON'T MESS AROUND WITH JASPER, MR. MADISON.
HE DID THE BEST HE COULD.
IT JUST DIDN'T WORK ON MAX. I DIDN'T THINK IT WOULD. HE'S SPECIAL.
I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYONE LIKE HIM.
SPARE ME THE PUPPY-LOVE, ROMAN. REMEMBER ONLY THAT YOUR JOB NOW IS TO COMPLETELY DESTROY THIS MAX CHARACTER.
AND MY TASK IS TO ENSURE THAT YOU ARE ABLE TO DO SO...
WHATEVER THE COST.
LATER...
"...AS ALL EYES TURN TOWARD THE CORPORATE RING, WHERE THE NEWCOMER, MAX TURNER, WILL BE CHALLENGING ROMAN ALEXIS FOR THE PURSE, THE CROWN, AND THE POWER.
INSIDERS REPORT THAT THERE MAY BE MORE AT STAKE IN THIS FIGHT THAN HAS EVER BEEN PUT ON THE LINE.
SHOOM
WHAT IN THE...?
GUNGH!
ROLF BRUNNING DOESN'T SEE AS...


...UNCARING, THE ANDROID TURNS FROM HIM...
...AND BEGINS TO SEARCH.
SEVEN HOURS LATER.
HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP: ROMAN vs MAX
ROMAN vs. MAX
IT'S A HOT TIME IN THE OLD TOWN TONIGHT.
ROMAN vs. MAX
ROMAN vs. MAX
A CORPORATE PRODUCTION
PRECEDENTS ARE BEING SET HERE. THE UNDERGROUNDERS ARE BEING ALLOWED UP, UP INTO THE COOL, CLEAR DAY.
...AND SO, BECAUSE OF THE NATURE OF THE FIGHT, AND THE ORIGINS OF THE CHALLENGER...
...SEVENTY FIVE THOUSAND SEATS ARE BEING MADE AVAILABLE TO NON-CORPORATE PERSONS AT A REDUCED COST.
THERE GOES THE LIFE-SAVINGS.
BUT NOBODY'S GOING TO MISS THIS ONE. IT'S TOO BIG. TOO IMPORTANT.
THE CORPORATE BROADCASTING SYSTEM presents:
ROMAN vs. MAX
YESSIR, NOBODY'S GOING TO MISS IT.
WELL, MAYBE ONE...
WHERE ON EARTH CAN ROLF BE?
I CAN'T BELIEVE HE'D MISS THIS. I'LL CALL HOME...
BE-DEE BOOT
OH...
...NO...



THE BIGGEST FIGHT OF MAX'S CAREER. MAYBE THE BIGGEST FIGHT **EVER**.

ROMAN ALEXIS
CORPORATE CHAMPION

HEIGHT: 6' 3"
CHEST: 45
WAIST: 38
CALF: 17
FIST: 15
NECK: 17
WEIGHT: 230
EQUIPPED WT: 307
GLOVE DIVISION: XL-7
200 WINS
0 LOSSES
0 DRAWS
199 K.O.s

MAX TURNER
INDEPENDENT CHALLENGER

HEIGHT: 6' 2.5"
CHEST: 46
WAIST: 37
CALF: 16.5
FIST: 15
NECK: 19
WEIGHT: 220
EQUIPPED WT: 297
GLOVE DIVISION: XL-7
210 WINS
0 LOSSES
2 DRAWS
208 K.O.s

AND DON'T THINK FOR A MOMENT THAT BOTH OF THEM DON'T KNOW THAT.

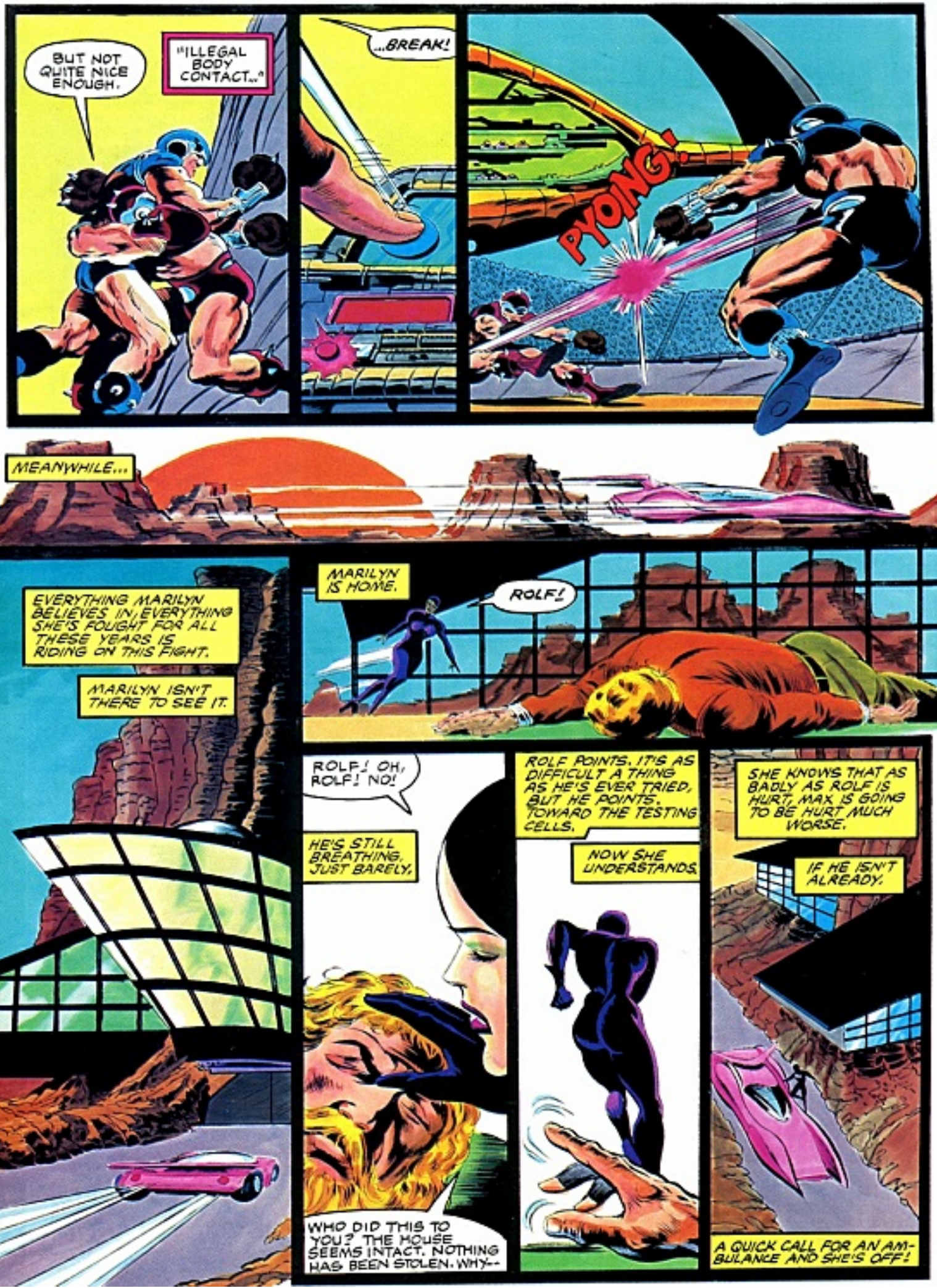
AND THEY'RE THINKING THAT, THINKING ABOUT NOTHING BUT THAT.

BECAUSE THIS, AS THEY SAY...

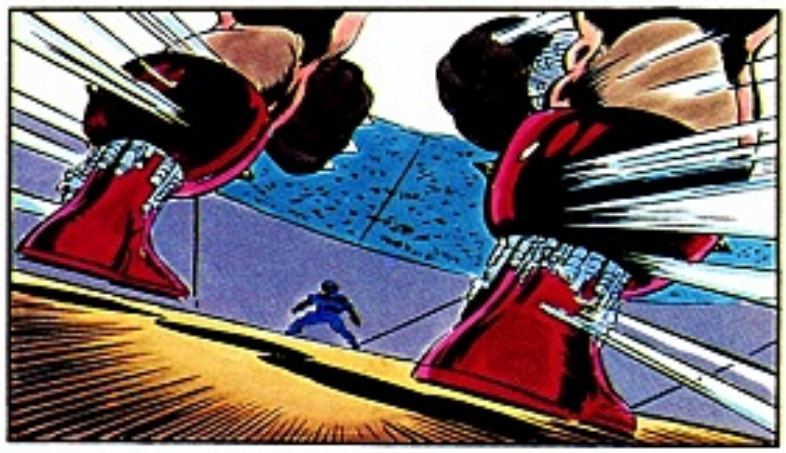
...IS IT!

OKAY, MAX, BOY. STAY ON YOUR TOES. THIS AIN'T THE UNDERGROUND NOW...
...THIS IS THE BIG TIME.
SITUATION SCAN SHOWS OPTIMUM. ROMAN, YOU MAY BEGIN ASSAULT PHASE ONE.
WATCH HIM, BOY! WATCH HIM.
HE'LL BE OFF-BALANCE FOR .03 SECONDS WHEN HE THROWS THAT PUNCH.
CONNECT RIGHT THEN AND YOU'LL HAVE HIM.
THE FRONT ROWS CAN ALMOST FEEL THE FORCE OF MAX'S SWING.
BUT A SWING IS ALL IT IS.
ROMAN DUCKS UNDER THE BLOW AS IF MAX WERE MOVING IN SLOW MOTION
...AND RESPONDS WITH A VISCIOUS ONE-TWO COMBINATION...

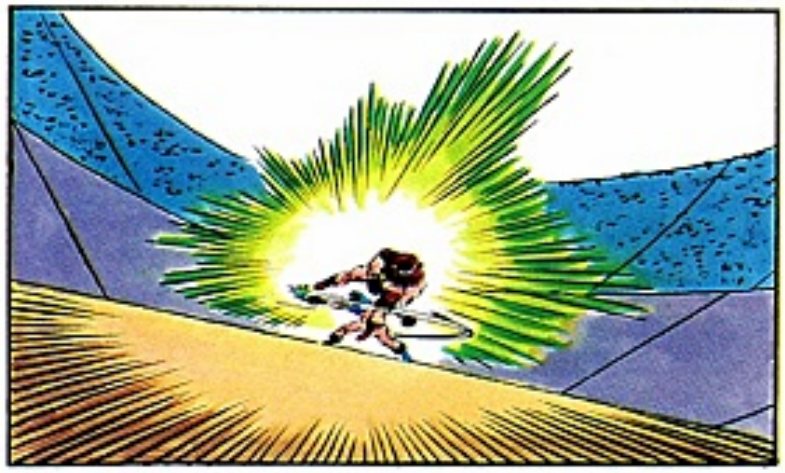
OH, BOY, YOU LET ME DOWN RIGHT OUTTA TH' BOX!
BUT MAX ISN'T LISTENING.
MAX IS JUST A LITTLE TOO BUSY HURTING.
AND THE CROWD--THE CORPORATE CROWD--KNOWS IT.
C'MON, BOY, GET YER FLABBY BUTT IN GEAR.
SCANNERS SHOW NOTHING'S BUSTED BUT YER PRIDE, NOW GET UP.
GET UP!
AN' FER GOD'S SAKE BE SMART THIS TIME.
STRAP ISN'T THE ONLY TRAINER WORKING THIS BOUT.
BIO-SCAN SHOWS OPPONENT LARGELY UNDAMAGED, ROMAN.
BUT NOT TOO FAST FOR MAX.
NICE MOVES, BLONDIE.
ROMAN'S JET-BOOTS CARRY HIM FASTER THAN THE CROWD CAN FOLLOW.
COMPUTER ANALYSIS ADVISES MANEUVER 17 B. OPTIMUM EXECUTION TIME 3.7 SECONDS


BUT NOT QUITE NICE ENOUGH.
"ILLEGAL BODY CONTACT..."
...BREAK!
PYOING!
MEANWHILE...
EVERYTHING MARILYN BELIEVES IN, EVERYTHING SHE'S FOUGHT FOR ALL THESE YEARS IS RIDING ON THIS FIGHT.
MARILYN ISN'T THERE TO SEE IT.
MARILYN IS HOME.
ROLF!
ROLF! OH, ROLF! NO!
HE'S STILL BREATHING, JUST BARELY.
WHO DID THIS TO YOU? THE HOUSE SEEMS INTACT. NOTHING HAS BEEN STOLEN. WHY--
ROLF POINTS. IT'S AS DIFFICULT A THING AS HE'S EVER TRIED, BUT HE POINTS. TOWARD THE TESTING CELLS.
NOW SHE UNDERSTANDS.
SHE KNOWS THAT AS BADLY AS ROLF IS HURT, MAX IS GOING TO BE HURT MUCH WORSE.
IF HE ISN'T ALREADY.
A QUICK CALL FOR AN AMBULANCE AND SHE'S OFF!

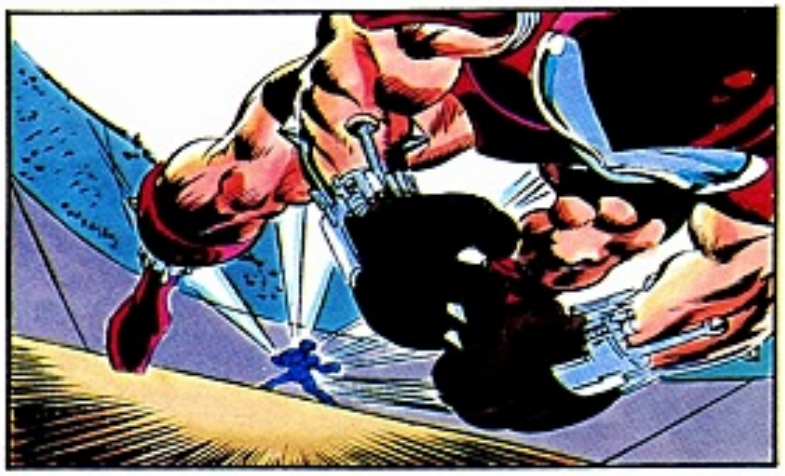
MEANWHILE...



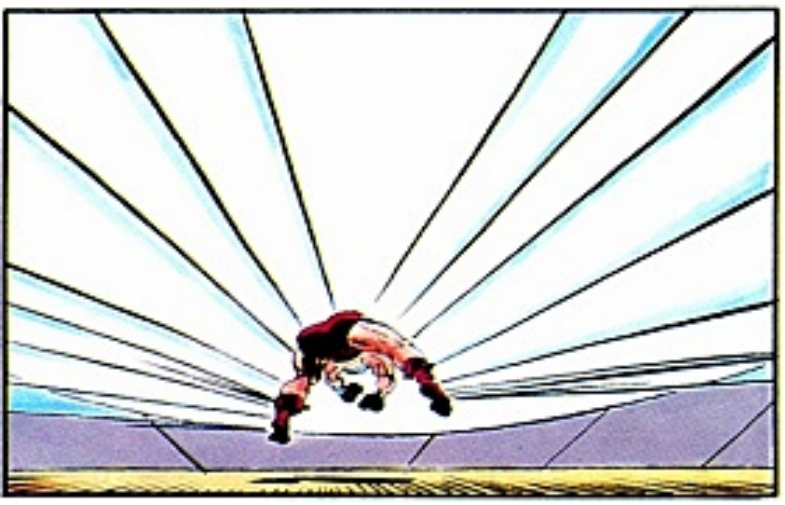
IF NOT, MAYBE YOU'D BETTER START NOW.



'CAUSE ROMAN IS BOUNCING MAX AROUND THE RING LIKE A RUBBER BALL.

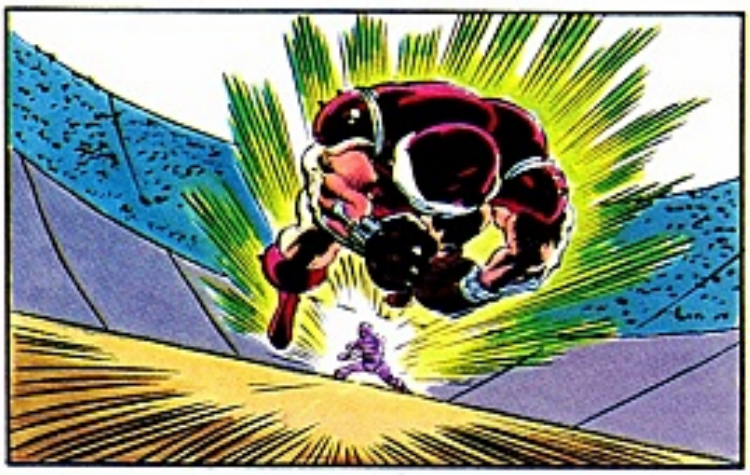


... MAX ISN'T...



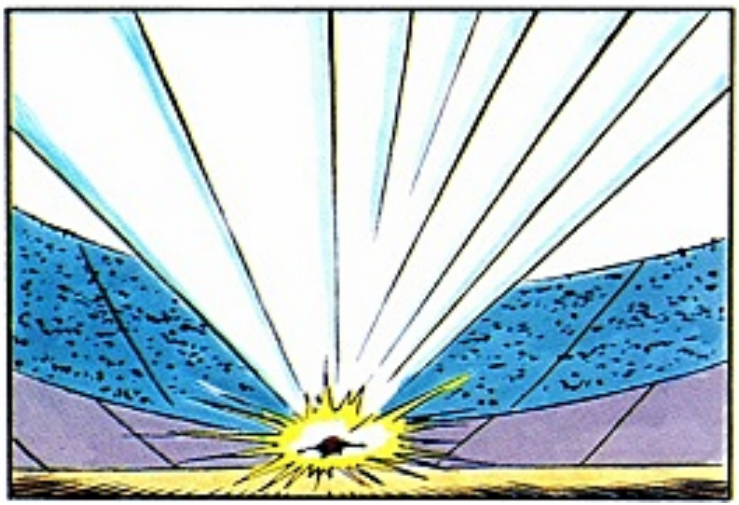
HAVE YOU BEEN ROOTING FOR MAX?

DOESN'T LOOK A WHOLE LOT LIKE YOU'LL HAVE MUCH MORE TIME TO DO IT.



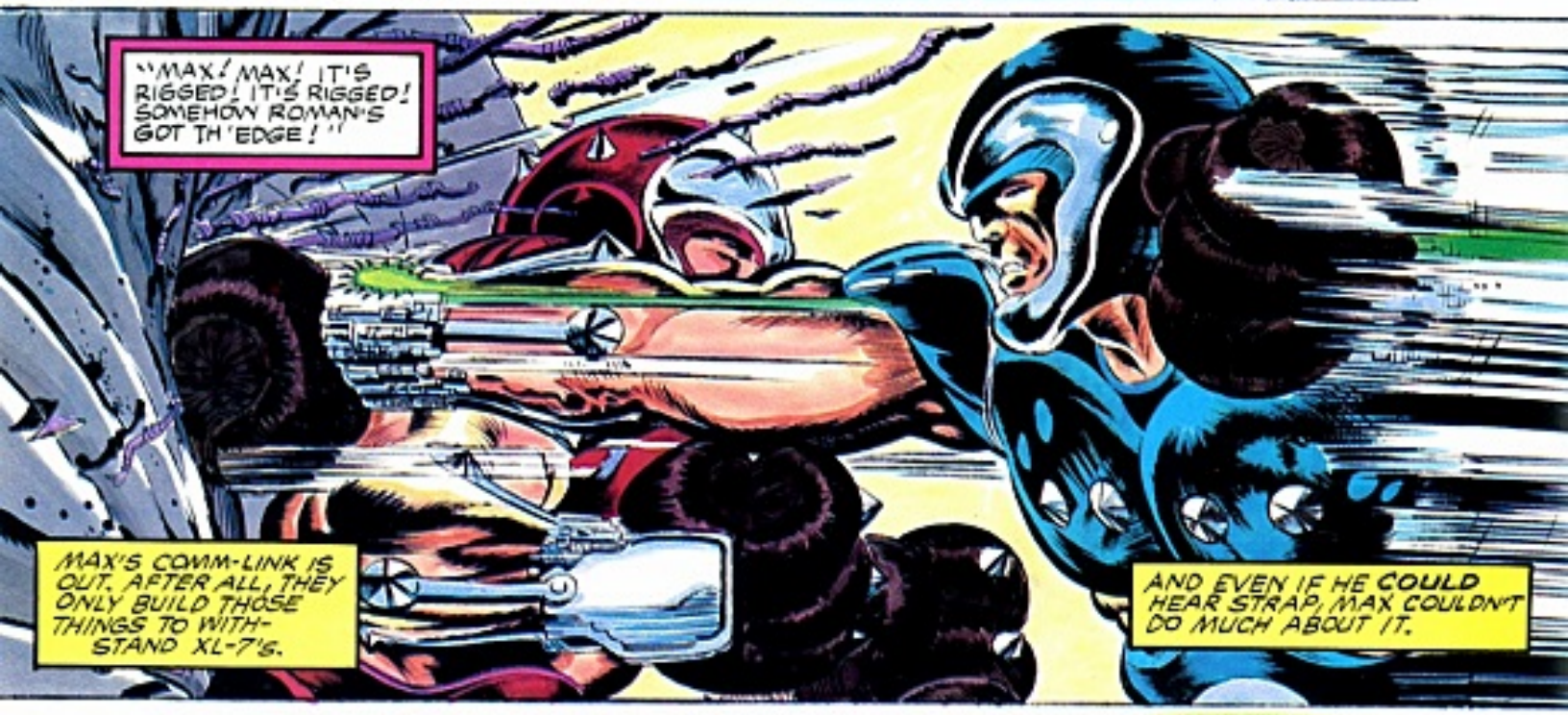
BUT UNLIKE A RUBBER BALL...

...BOUNCING BACK.



YEAH, MAX ISN'T DOING TOO WELL...
...NOT WELL AT ALL!

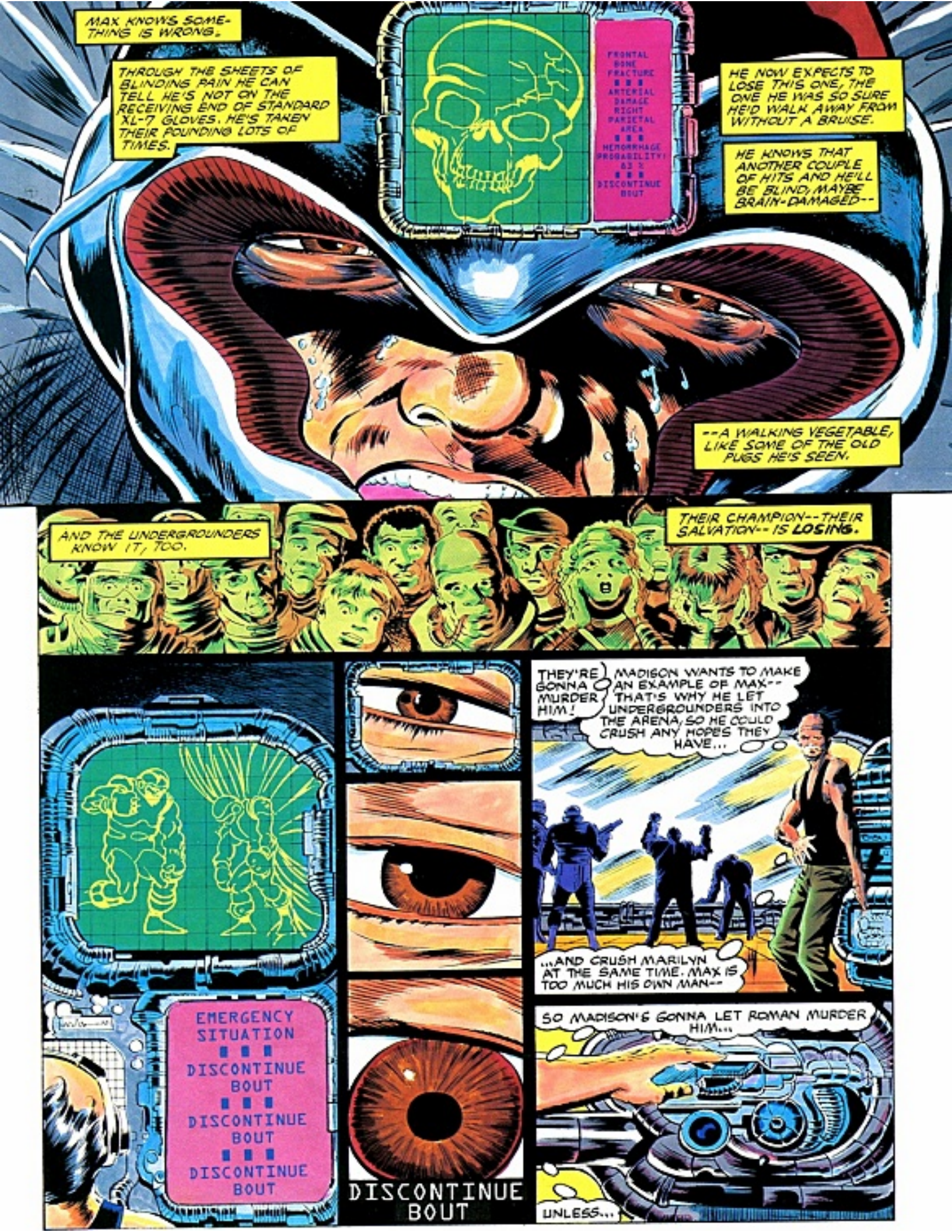
MAX! MAX! DAMMIT, BOY, WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU?
YOU'VE TAKEN WORSE THAN THIS AN' COME OUT SMILIN'.
THE DOOR TO THE BOOTH OPENS. IT'S NOT MARILYN WITH HER URGENT WARNING. IT'S--
MADISON! WHAT'RE YOU DOIN' IN HERE?
GO CRAWL BACK UNDER YOUR ROCK. MY BOYS GOT A FIGHT TO WIN.
HE WILL LOSE, STRAP. HE CANNOT STOP ROMAN HE CAN'T DEFEND AGAINST XL-10's.

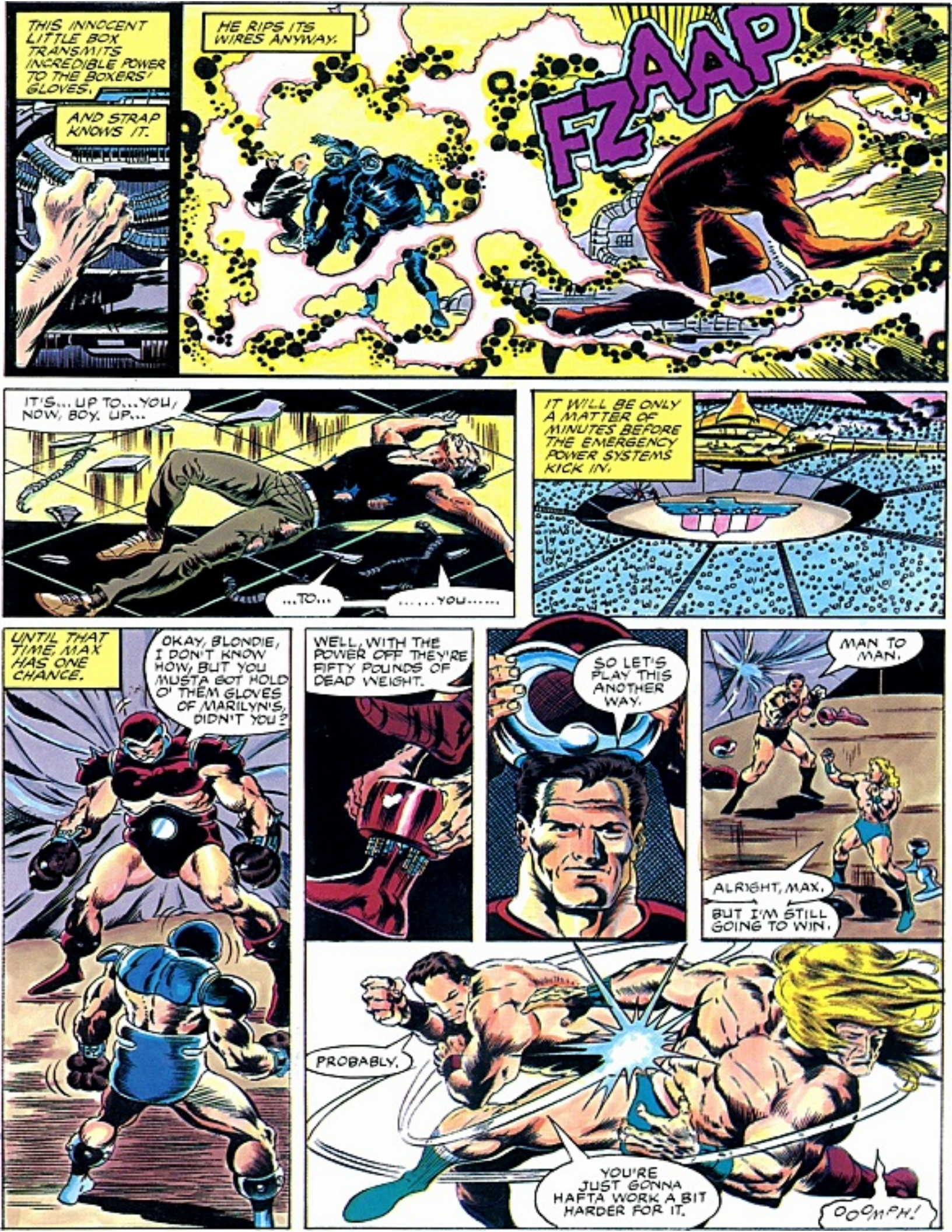

"MAX! MAX! IT'S RIGGED! IT'S RIGGED! SOMEHOW ROMAN'S GOT TH' EDGE!"
MAX'S COMM-LINK IS OUT. AFTER ALL, THEY ONLY BUILD THOSE THINGS TO WITH-STAND XL-7's.
AND EVEN IF HE COULD HEAR STRAP, MAX COULDN'T DO MUCH ABOUT IT.

HE'S TOO BUSY JUST STAYING CONSCIOUS.
STAYING ALIVE!

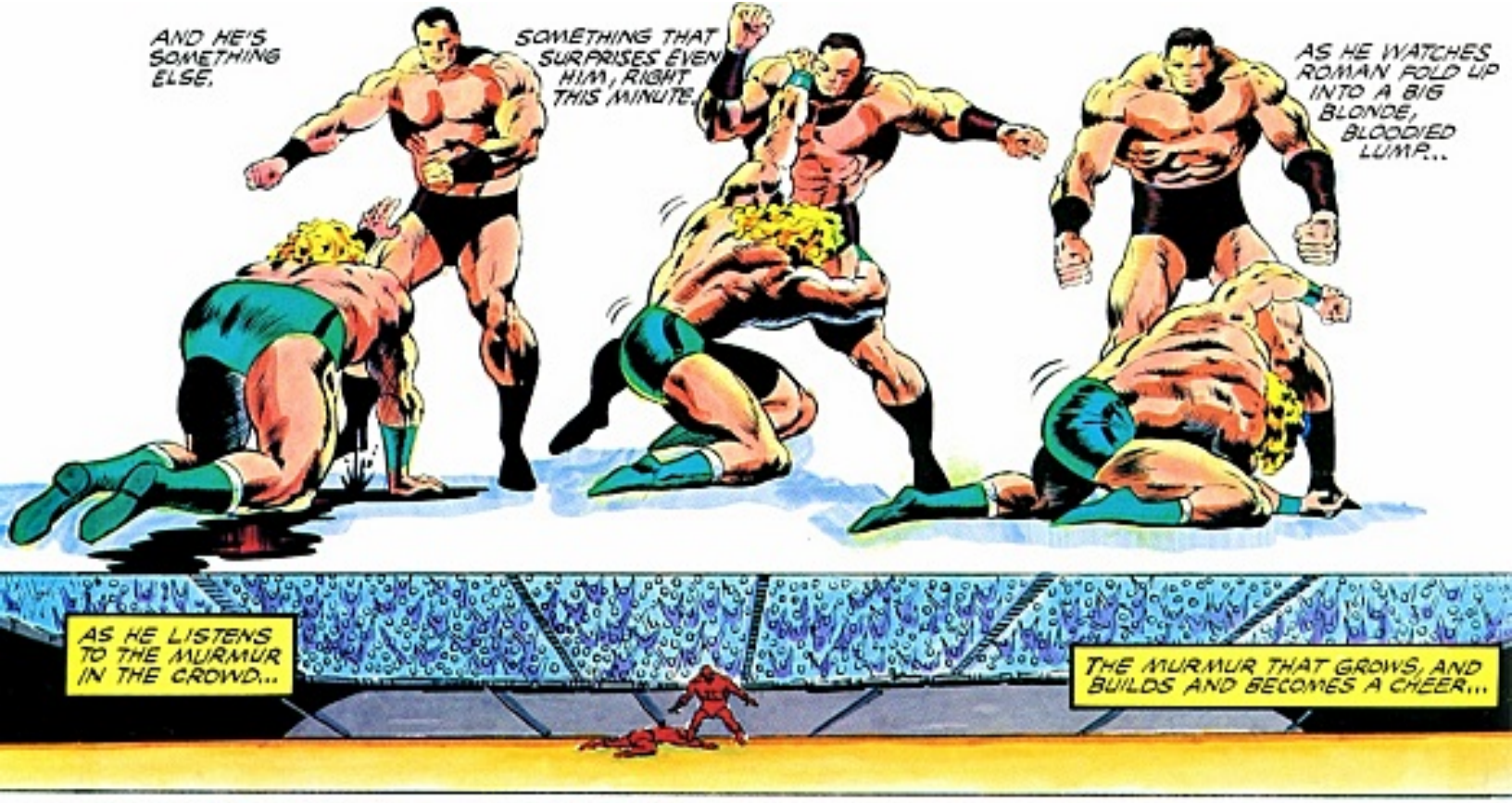
MAX... MAX, YA GOTTA GET OUTTA THERE...
BEAT HIM, ROMAN...

"...KILL HIM!"


MAX KNOWS SOMETHING IS WRONG.
THROUGH THE SHEETS OF BLINDING RAIN HE CAN TELL HE'S NOT ON THE RECEIVING END OF STANDARD XL-7 GLOVES. HE'S TAKEN THEIR POUNDING LOTS OF TIMES.
FRONTAL BONE FRACTURE
ARTERIAL DAMAGE RIGHT PARIETAL AREA
HEMORRHAGE PROBABILITY! 83 %
DISCONTINUE BOUT
HE NOW EXPECTS TO LOSE THIS ONE, THE ONE HE WAS SO SURE HE'D WALK AWAY FROM WITHOUT A BRUISE.
HE KNOWS THAT ANOTHER COUPLE OF HITS AND HE'LL BE BLIND, MAYBE BRAIN-DAMAGED--
--A WALKING VEGETABLE, LIKE SOME OF THE OLD PUGS HE'S SEEN.
AND THE UNDERGROUNDERS KNOW IT, TOO.
THEIR CHAMPION--THEIR SALVATION--IS LOSING.
EMERGENCY SITUATION
DISCONTINUE BOUT
DISCONTINUE BOUT
DISCONTINUE BOUT
DISCONTINUE BOUT
THEY'RE GONNA MURDER HIM!
MADISON WANTS TO MAKE AN EXAMPLE OF MAX--THAT'S WHY HE LET UNDERGROUNDERS INTO THE ARENA, SO HE COULD CRUSH ANY HOPES THEY HAVE...
...AND CRUSH MARILYN AT THE SAME TIME. MAX IS TOO MUCH HIS OWN MAN--
SO MADISON'S GONNA LET ROMAN MURDER HIM...
UNLESS...


THIS INNOCENT LITTLE BOX TRANSMITS INCREDIBLE POWER TO THE BOXERS' GLOVES.
AND STRAP KNOWS IT.
HE RIPS ITS WIRES ANYWAY.
FZAAP
IT'S... UP TO... YOU, NOW, BOY. UP...
...TO...
.....YOU.....
IT WILL BE ONLY A MATTER OF MINUTES BEFORE THE EMERGENCY POWER SYSTEMS KICK IN.
UNTIL THAT TIME, MAX HAS ONE CHANCE.
OKAY, BLONDIE, I DON'T KNOW HOW, BUT YOU MUSTA GOT HOLD O' THEM GLOVES OF MARILYN'S, DIDN'T YOU?
WELL, WITH THE POWER OFF THEY'RE FIFTY POUNDS OF DEAD WEIGHT.
SO LET'S PLAY THIS ANOTHER WAY.
MAN TO MAN.
ALRIGHT, MAX, BUT I'M STILL GOING TO WIN.
PROBABLY.
YOU'RE JUST GONNA HAFTA WORK A BIT HARDER FOR IT.
OOMPH!

MAX AND ROMAN.
YOU COULDN'T FIND TWO MORE DIFFERENT GUYS IF YOU TRIED.
ROMAN IS THE END PRODUCT OF SELECTIVE BREEDING AND THE FINEST TRAINING
BUT MAX-- OUR BOY MAX...
HE'S COME UP FROM THE STREETS, COME UP THE HARD WAY.
HE'S A FIGHTER.


AND HE'S SOMETHING ELSE.
SOMETHING THAT SURPRISES EVEN HIM, RIGHT THIS MINUTE.
AS HE WATCHES ROMAN FOLD UP INTO A BIG BLONDE, BLOODIED LUMP...
AS HE LISTENS TO THE MURMUR IN THE CROWD...
THE MURMUR THAT GROWS, AND BUILDS AND BECOMES A CHEER...

A GREAT, WONDERFUL ROAR OF TRIUMPH.
MORE THAN HE EVER WAS, MORE THAN HE EVER DREAMED...

MAX IS THE CHAMPION.
THE WINNER!

EPILOG ONE:
ELSEWHERE, LATER, OTHER VICTORIES.
Delcosmetics
MARILYN HART HAS KEPT DELCOSMETICS, KEPT THE LIFE SHE FOUGHT FOR, IN HER OWN MANNER, IN HER OWN WAY.

THERE WILL BE A NEW BOARD OF DIRECTORS NOW.
Delcosmetics
PEOPLE MORE SYMPATHETIC TO MARILYN'S METHODS, TO THE NEEDS OF THE WORKERS AND THOSE OUTSIDE THE CORPORATE WORLD.

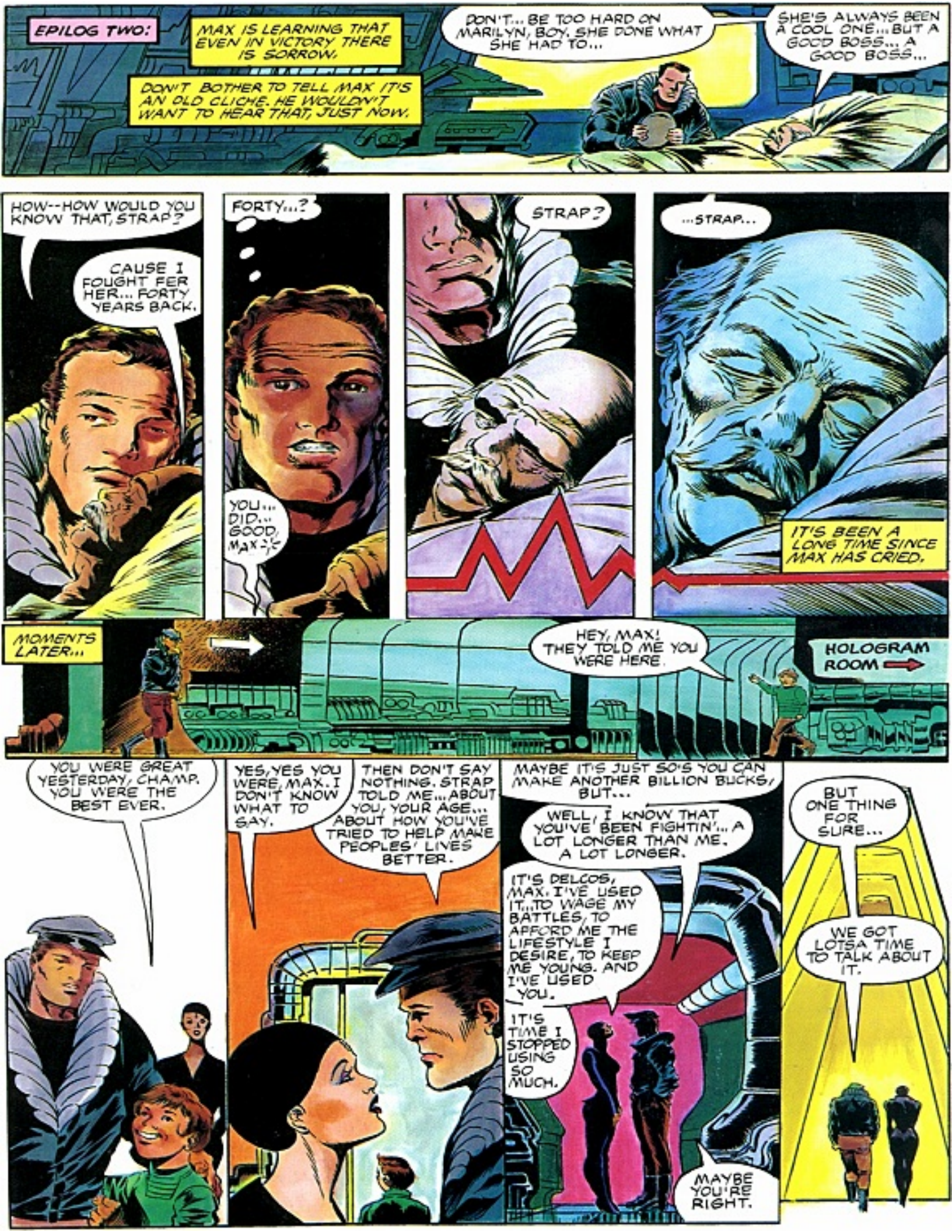
AND GARRY MADISON?
HE'S TOO HIGH ON THE LADDER FOR THE LAW TO TOUCH HIM, EVEN WITH ALL THAT BLOOD ON HIS HANDS.
BUT HE HAS SUDDENLY BECOME A BAD RISK, AN UNSOUND INVESTMENT.
WE WON'T BE HEARING FROM HIM AGAIN--EVER.

AND, ALL ALONE NOW IN HER SILENT, EMPTY BOARDROOM, MARILYN COUNTS HER HEART-BEATS, AND THINKS ABOUT WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN.
SHE HAS HER VICTORY. SHE HAS HER COMPANY. SHE HAS THE YOUTH AND BEAUTY SHE HAS STRUGGLED FOR SO LONG TO KEEP.
BUT IT HAS COST HER SOMETHING.

SOMETHING SHE NEVER REALLY KNEW SHE HAD TO PAY.
SO THE VICTORY IS A LITTLE LESS FULFILLING THAN IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN, IF SHE HAD NOT BEEN ALONE HERE, AT THE END. IF SHE HAD NOT LOST MAX.

AND SHE REALIZES THAT HAVING MAX IS, PERHAPS, NOT SO IMPOSSIBLE AFTER ALL.

IT WILL BE A FIGHT, CERTAINLY.
BUT NO HARDER THAN THE ONE SHE JUST WON.


EPILOG TWO:
MAX IS LEARNING THAT EVEN IN VICTORY THERE IS SORROW.
DON'T BOTHER TO TELL MAX IT'S AN OLD CLICHE. HE WOULDN'T WANT TO HEAR THAT, JUST NOW.
DON'T... BE TOO HARD ON MARILYN, BOY. SHE DONE WHAT SHE HAD TO...
SHE'S ALWAYS BEEN A COOL ONE... BUT A GOOD BOSS... A GOOD BOSS...
HOW--HOW WOULD YOU KNOW THAT, STRAP?
CAUSE I FOUGHT FER HER... FORTY YEARS BACK.
FORTY...?
YOU... DID... GOOD, MAX.
STRAP?
...STRAP...
IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE MAX HAS CRIED.
MOMENTS LATER...
HEY, MAX! THEY TOLD ME YOU WERE HERE.
HOLOGRAM ROOM
YOU WERE GREAT YESTERDAY, CHAMP. YOU WERE THE BEST EVER.
YES, YES YOU WERE, MAX. I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY.
THEN DON'T SAY NOTHING. STRAP TOLD ME... ABOUT YOU, YOUR AGE... ABOUT HOW YOU'VE TRIED TO HELP MAKE PEOPLES' LIVES BETTER.
MAYBE IT'S JUST SO'S YOU CAN MAKE ANOTHER BILLION BUCKS, BUT...
WELL, I KNOW THAT YOU'VE BEEN FIGHTIN'... A LOT LONGER THAN ME. A LOT LONGER.
IT'S DELCOS, MAX. I'VE USED IT... TO WAGE MY BATTLES, TO AFFORD ME THE LIFESTYLE I DESIRE, TO KEEP ME YOUNG. AND I'VE USED YOU.
IT'S TIME I STOPPED USING SO MUCH.
MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT.
BUT ONE THING FOR SURE...
WE GOT LOTSA TIME TO TALK ABOUT IT.